

# ITALIAN SEA POWER

## IN THE GREAT WAR

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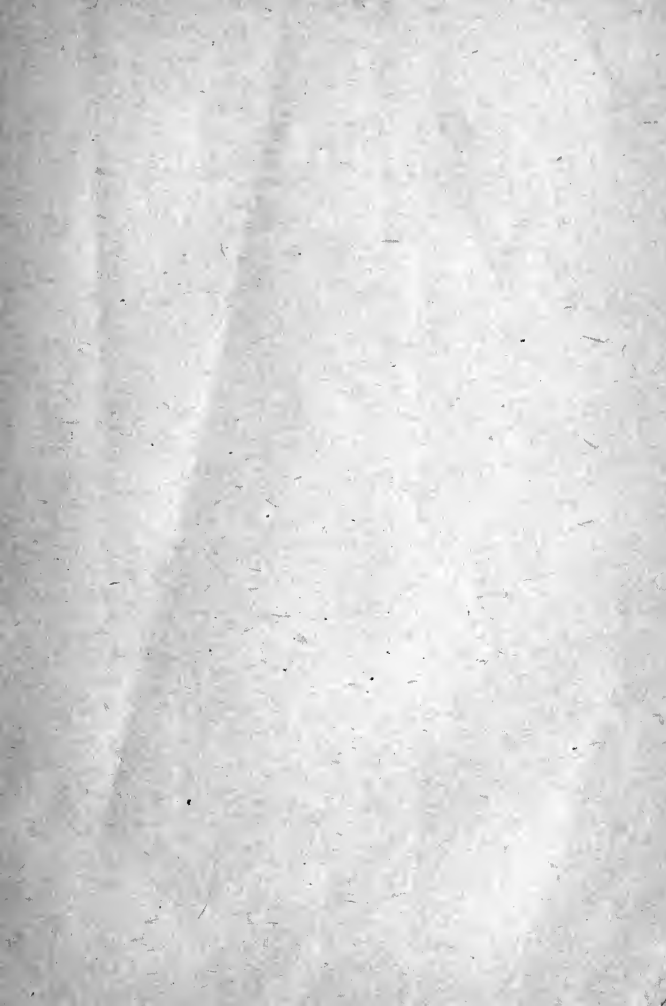


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ITALIAN SEA-POWER AND THE  
GREAT WAR





# ITALIAN SEA-POWER AND THE GREAT WAR

BY

ARCHIBALD HURD

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"THE COMMAND OF THE SEA " ETC.

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# ITALIAN SEA-POWER AND THE GREAT WAR

## CHAPTER I

### MODERN ITALY AND ITS MAKERS

#### I

IDEALS have always been stronger than treaties; and although it has happened over and over again in the history of nations that political intrigue and *force majeure* have created barriers between States and peoples with common ideals of liberty, truth, and honour, these have always proved in the long run too strong either for political plotters or military despots. The peoples sharing them have been drawn together by virtue of an inner force that can never be ultimately checked. So it has been with England, France, and Italy, the three great Sea Powers of Europe—at certain periods ranged against each other in opposite camps, but never in spirit wholly antagonistic, and now, in the supremest hour of the world's testing, inevitably, and it is to be hoped permanently, welded in friendship.

Between England and Italy, indeed, there have always been ties, not, perhaps, political, but, it may be, all the more effective for that—the instinctive realization of the peculiar contributions that each country has made to the progress of civilization. To Italy, since Renaissance days, our artists and poets have always been pilgrims. Chaucer and Shakespeare were openly indebted for much of their inspira-

tion to Boccaccio and Petrarch. The bones of Shelley and Keats lie in Italian soil. From the Italy that he loved and sojourned in so long and lovingly, Browning brought back treasures that have become a permanent inheritance of English letters. And in no other country, perhaps, in the world was the long and often apparently hopeless struggle for Italian unity and freedom followed with such deep and ardent sympathy as in the British Isles. Very indirectly, indeed, it may perhaps be said that the British administration of Sicily in the troubled period from 1806 to 1814 may have been one of the influences inspiring the makers of the Greater Italy of to-day, just as in the north the civic freedom, breathed into the world by France at the cost of so much self-martyrdom, survived the ebb of the Napoleonic conquest and the natural passions that had been aroused by it.

Exhausted as she was, divided and oppressed, as the Congress of Vienna unhappily left her, both from France and England the Italy that was to come had drawn something that she needed. The life of States moves slowly. It is little over a century since the Congress of Vienna arranged the affairs of Italy. It is scarcely to be wondered, therefore, that the Italy of the *Entente*, with its gallant army and its great fleet, has been described as one of the political marvels of modern Europe. That the self-distrustful, mutually distrusting, artificially separated, alien-ruled States—each with its splendid traditions, but each exploited and exhausted—should be to-day fighting as an effective unit in the cause of the world's liberty is little short of a miracle. How great a miracle can best be judged by glancing back for a moment to 1815.

In that year, on June 9, by the Final Act of the Congress of Vienna, the constitution of the Italian States was determined as follows: Venetia, Istria, Dalmatia, and Milanese were handed to Austria; Sardinia, Nice, and Savoy passed under the sovereignty of Victor Emmanuel I.; the Ionian Isles became a British Protectorate; Parma and Piacenza

were allotted to Marie Louise, the daughter of the Emperor of Austria; Tuscany passed into the hands of the Grand Duke Ferdinand III. of Hapsburg-Lorraine; the Pope was reinstated in his former temporal possessions; the Duchy of Lucca fell to Marie Louise of Bourbon-Parma; Francis IV., son of the Archduke Ferdinand of Austria, returned as Duke of Modena; and Ferdinand IV. of Naples became Ferdinand I. of the two Sicilies. The greater part of Italy, in short, fell, directly or indirectly, under the harsh and reactionary domination of Austria.

Such, then, was the position in 1815; and nothing could well have seemed remoter at that time than the united Italy of to-day. Yet almost immediately the first of those tentative movements that were eventually to result in this became evident. It was headed by the Carbonarists of Naples, at first with momentary success, but soon to be crushed by Austrian intervention, at the battle of Rieti in 1821. Smothered in the south, however, a similar movement, constitutional and anti-Austrian, broke out in Piedmont, with the connivance of Charles Albert of Savoy, heir-presumptive to Victor Emmanuel, and his brother Charles Felix. This was also beaten near Novara, again with the aid of Austrian bayonets. Similar movements in Lombardy and Milan were also ruthlessly put down, among many others the famous poet Silvio Pellico being imprisoned and treated with the utmost harshness. For a time, therefore, it appeared that, owing to Austria's overwhelming strength, there was no hope for the pioneers of united Italy. Nor were the rebellions of 1831 in Romagna, Parma, and Modena any more successful. After a fleeting success and the proclamation of an Italian nation by Biagio Nardi, the follower of Menotti, Austrian arms again proved too strong. The movement was stamped out, and Menotti and many of his comrades were hanged. It was in this dark year, however, that Charles Albert succeeded to the kingdom of Sardinia, and was exhorted by the young Mazzini to place

himself at the head of a further and greater effort to unite Italy and free her from foreign domination.

This was the first appearance in the Italian theatre of the Young Italy party organized by Mazzini;\* and though for years it met with nothing but disaster, it introduced larger views and more effective propaganda than had been initiated by the Carbonarists, while the unhappy effort in Calabria in 1844 of the two brothers Bandiera—members of the Young Italy party, Venetian by birth, and naval officers by profession—was the first open instance of an attempt to unify the liberal patriots of North and South Italy. That movement was suppressed, as so many of its predecessors had been, the unfortunate Bandieras being shot; but by this time, though still largely invisible, enormous headway had in reality been made. Secret Italian councils in liberal and hospitable countries, including the United Kingdom, were at work, not only gaining sympathy for their cause, but printing and smuggling into Italy vast quantities of impassioned and revolutionary literature. Others in Spain and South America were acquainting themselves with war, among them—the best known of all, perhaps—Giuseppe Garibaldi. And, side by side with these, more moderate, but still liberal and anti-Austrian, parties were growing up in Italy itself. In both Pius IX., who became Pope in 1848, and Charles Albert, whose animosity to Austria was steadily growing, these parties found either direct or indirect supporters. And it is interesting to note that in 1847 the British Government, in its anxiety to avoid the bloodshed and fatal possibilities

\* Mazzini spent many years of his early manhood in London, where he made many friends. In a letter to *The Times* Thomas Carlyle wrote; "I have had the honour to know Mr. Mazzini for a series of years, and whatever I may have thought of his practical insight and skill in worldly affairs, I can with great freedom testify that he, if I have ever seen one such, is a man of genius and virtue—one of those rare men, numerable unfortunately but as units in this world, who are worthy to be called martyr souls; who in silence, piously in their daily life, practise what is meant by that."



of a general revolution, sent Lord Minto on a round of visits to the Italian courts, in the interests of an enlightened liberalism—a mission from which, as it turned out vainly, the Italian patriots hoped for great results.

## II

Very briefly, then, that was the position when, in 1848, a series of events occurred that carried Italian unity a very long stride forward. Rebellions broke out both at Palermo and at Naples, which the King of Naples was unable to crush. He was at length obliged to grant a constitution. Similar demands had for long been urged by Count Cavour upon Charles Albert in the north; and, with the movement in Naples adding further fuel to this, he also made far-reaching concessions—signing the charter, in fact, providing for an elective house, a nominated senate, and the freedom of the Press, which was eventually to become the basis of the constitution of united Italy. Nor did the wave end in Piedmont. Both in Tuscany and even to a certain extent in the Austrian-ruled provinces of Lombardy and Venetia reforms were granted, not without much reluctance, although, in the latter province, too late to forestall the most extensive and violent upheaval yet experienced there. This was the Five Days' Revolution in which the Austrian garrison was driven from Milan, and as an immediate result of which a republic was proclaimed in Venice, and provisional governments in Milan, Modena, and Parma. The moment now seemed ripe for a concerted effort at the final expulsion of Austrian influence; and had it been seized with vision and determination, this might very possibly have been accomplished. Unfortunately, this was not the case, though Charles Albert put armies into the field, the Pope, Tuscany, and Naples lending their assistance. Hesitating counsels, lack of military genius, and local disputes, led to inevitable failure, although each army gained initial successes which might

well have been developed into final victory. As it was, the Austrian armies were enabled to take full advantage of the situation, and Charles Albert was defeated at the first battle of Custoza, and afterwards mobbed at Milan, finally retiring again to Piedmont, while Lombardy and Venetia passed once more into Austrian hands.

Nevertheless, the country was still profoundly unsettled, so much so that, later in the year, the Pope fled from Rome, and in the following February a republic was proclaimed there, Mazzini being appointed head of the presiding triumvirates. And although, in the south, Ferdinand of Naples was already busy retracting his constitutional promises, further north in Tuscany a republic was also proclaimed. For the moment, therefore, the position was one of flux, although, with Charles Albert still undestroyed, hopes were not dead that the forces struggling for freedom might become permanently established. This was not yet, however, to prove the case, for though Charles Albert made a gallant effort to prove his sympathies with Lombardy and Venetia, he was again defeated by the Austrians at the battle of Novara, the Austrians demanding as a consequence a portion of Piedmont itself. Upon this he abdicated in favour of Victor Emmanuel II., dying a few months later in Portugal.

Thus once more the tide turned heavily against the cause of freedom. Victor Emmanuel was confined to Piedmont. The Grand Duke was restored to Tuscany, with an Austrian occupation of Florence. The Roman Republic, in spite of the heroic efforts of Mazzini and Garibaldi,\* was crushed, Garibaldi himself, after incredible perils, returning to South America again as an exile. Venice was besieged and reduced by famine. Ferdinand, finally abandoning all his previous promises of reform, again established himself as autocrat in Naples and Sicily. Only in Piedmont did constitutionalism survive, oppressive as the Austrian terms of

\* Garibaldi was made a freeman of the City of London, 1846.

peace had been, though it is pleasant to remember that these were substantially modified as the result of English and French representations. Nothing appeared to remain, indeed, out of the general collapse but a few fundamental lessons for Italy's much-tried deliverers—namely, that a republic was impracticable, since only upon the foundation of Victor Emmanuel's forces could a further army of victory be built, and that no other ruler in Italy was even half-heartedly sympathetic with the national desire for liberty and union.

For the succeeding ten years Austrian autocracy seemed to be stronger than ever. Yet, though its rule was severer than it had ever been, the longing for Italian liberty grew apace. By patient statesmanship, Cavour in Sardinia and Piedmont was cautiously working towards his ideal of a northern Italian kingdom, free from Austrian tyranny, and even beyond that towards the final aim of a united kingdom of Italy. And in Victor Emmanuel he found a wise fellow-counsellor. To further this end, and increase French and English sympathy, they furnished armed assistance in the Crimean War, meanwhile increasing the strength of the Piedmontese kingdom by a far-sighted development of internal resources. At the same time also, although working independently, and on more violent and less fruitful lines, Mazzini and his followers kept up the fires of revolution in other parts of Italy. Finally, with the help of Napoleon III., Garibaldi, and volunteers collected from all over Italy, the next great attempt was made by Victor Emmanuel and Cavour in 1859, the Austrians being seriously defeated by the French at Solferino, and by the Piedmontese at San Martino on June 24. Once again, however, divided counsels, together with fear and hesitation on the part of Napoleon, led to a compromise, which, indeed, left Lombardy under the enlightened rule of Victor Emmanuel, but saw Austria in possession again of Venetia, and her nominees restored to Tuscany, Parma, and Modena

—albeit chiefly in name, and amidst the violent protests of large majorities of the populations.

Reactionary measures and local uprisings produced their inevitable crop of massacres, and the next year saw Garibaldi again raising the standard of revolt, this time in the south. Defeating the reactionary armies of Francis II. of Naples, he proclaimed himself dictator of Sicily, under the protection of Victor Emmanuel, and, later in the year, he extended his triumph to Naples, and turned his eyes towards Rome. It was now clear both to Victor Emmanuel and Cavour, for more reasons than one, that they must once more intervene, partly because of the danger of a Papal victory and partly because Mazzini's followers, working for a republic, and forming a large portion of Garibaldi's troops, would, if successful, inevitably provoke outside European intervention. Accordingly the Piedmontese army was set in motion, defeating the Papal forces and joining hands with Garibaldi, who, having accomplished his task, once more went into retirement, having refused all the honours that Victor Emmanuel had offered him. Further successes of Victor Emmanuel's army then secured the whole of South Italy; and on February 18, 1861, at the first Italian Parliament at Turin, Victor Emmanuel was proclaimed King of Italy, England being the first and France the second Great Power to recognize his authority.

This still, however, left Venetia and Rome excluded. The next great object of Italian policy was to secure these also. Unhappily, Cavour, to whom Italian unity owed so great a debt, died soon afterwards; Garibaldi became estranged from the succeeding ministries; while the immense amount of internal organization, following upon such long disorders, clamoured without delay to be put in hand, and this in the presence of a financial situation that might very well have caused any Government to despair. The position in Rome, too, was one of extreme delicacy, owing to the religious factor; Napoleon III., who was guarding the Pope's tem-

poral power with French troops, desired to withdraw, but was afraid of the consequences of this act upon Catholic opinion in his own country. It was also becoming clear that local rebellions would be insufficient of themselves to free Venetia, since Italy herself was not yet powerful enough to risk another war single-handed.

### III

This was the situation when, in 1866, a new factor appeared on the scene in the person of Bismarck, already far on his way with his own schemes for Prussian supremacy. He was even then contemplating, having defeated Denmark, the establishment of German domination over Austria. To Bismarck an Italian diversion against Austria would coincide admirably with the campaign that he himself had already planned against her. Napoleon III. lending his approval, a Prusso-Italian Alliance was formed in 1866, though not without considerable hesitation and natural reluctance on the part of Victor Emmanuel. In the circumstances, however, and considering the many and individual elements of weakness in his own position, he had but little choice. Shortly after this Prussia declared war on Austria, Italy following suit four days later.

Owing to bad generalship, Italy was defeated at the second battle of Custoza, and for the same reason, a month later, her navy suffered at Lissa, only Garibaldi, once more in the field, winning successes in the Trentino. Meanwhile Prussia, having defeated Austria at Königgratz, very characteristically, without consulting Italy, agreed to an armistice, Italy being granted an eight days' truce, on condition of evacuating the Trentino. Having thus, as it were, served Prussia's purpose, Italy was virtually compelled to make peace. By a secret arrangement, however, between Napoleon III. and Austria, Austria yielded Venetia to the French Emperor, and he immediately submitted its future

relationships to a plebiscite of the province. By an overwhelming majority this declared itself in favour of union with Italy under King Victor Emmanuel, and Venetia was thus at last added to the kingdom. This still left Rome outstanding, and virtually under the protection of Napoleon III.; and, though he withdrew his troops at the end of the year, the Papal forces continued to be largely recruited and officered by Frenchmen, the clerical parties in France rendering the whole position difficult both for Napoleon himself and Victor Emmanuel, and the more so in view of the activities of Mazzini and Garibaldi, with the general principles of which Victor Emmanuel was in sympathy.

Garibaldi, indeed, collecting yet another army of devoted but ill-trained volunteers, led an attack against the Papacy, at first with the connivance, but later in despite, of the responsible Italian Government. An unhappy campaign took place, involving Garibaldi and his followers in armed conflict with French and Papal forces, in which he was completely broken at Mentana on November 3, 1867—a defeat that almost necessarily led, as Victor Emmanuel had foreseen, to an unfortunate outbreak of hostility throughout Italy towards France. This, of course, was a sentiment which Bismarck, with the Franco-Prussian War already germinating in his mind, did not hesitate to foster. Under such circumstances Victor Emmanuel could only exercise patience and await events. But for misunderstandings, largely due to cunning Prussian diplomacy, it is possible that Victor Emmanuel would have stood with France in the Franco-Prussian War. Italy's sympathies with France and, indeed, her desire to lend armed assistance to her were unconcealed. For various reasons, strategical and political, this could not be offered to her in time, and after Sedan it was quite obvious that no help that Italy could bring could be of any avail. It was in this year that Victor Emmanuel's troops occupied Rome, the Pope yielding, after

a slight resistance, to *force majeure*. Two years later, in July, 1872, Victor Emmanuel himself made his State entry. Rome was then proclaimed the capital of united Italy. Thus there emerged at last, after a travail almost without parallel in political history, that free and united country for which so many of her noblest sons had sacrificed, not only health and property, but life itself.

## CHAPTER II

### THE ORIGIN AND COLLAPSE OF THE TRIPLE ALLIANCE .

#### I

SUCH was the union of Italy, consummated in what has been well described as the heroic period, and now succeeded, after a generation of consolidation, by her national reassertion of the principles that created her, and her definite alignment, with a unanimity no less heroic, with the liberty-loving nations of the world in the present war. That she should have done otherwise, with such a past and with such a choice as was presented to her by Prussian aggression, few of those even slightly acquainted with her history could have doubted. And even among her partners in the Triple Alliance there cannot have been many illusions as to her probable action, once the issues at stake had become manifest. For the Triple Alliance, as far as Italy was concerned, was never the outcome of a real affinity, but was primarily due to three factors, as it is proposed briefly to show—namely, her natural weakness as the youngest and latest-arrived State of Europe, her sudden appearance as a united kingdom, geographically dominating the Mediterranean, and the typical handling of the situation by Bismarck according to the now well-known methods of Prussian diplomacy.

Thus, with France conquered, but by no means crushed, as the result of the war of 1870-1, passionately resentful and irreparably wounded by the loss of Alsace-Lorraine; with Italy united indeed, but with large Italian populations in the Southern Tyrol, Istria, and Dalmatia still in the hands of, and oppressively governed by, Austria, her hereditary enemy; and with the Papacy reluctant as ever to be satisfied with its spiritual apart from its temporal power, the course to be followed was plainly indicated to the Bismarckian mind. Realizing that Italy as a young Power, the youngest in the comity of Europe, could not stand alone—realizing also that though, for the moment, she was weak enough to be bullied, she would certainly grow stronger—nothing was easier or more obvious to the Prussian nature, as a solution of the problem, than to sow distrust between Italy and her great neighbour France; to threaten Rome with Austrian intervention, when it seemed politically advisable to do so; to encourage at Vienna every element of resistance at the least whisper of Irridentist claims; and even to make hints at the Vatican of Prussia's deep sympathy with Papal ideals.

It was with this in view that at the Congress of Berlin, Bismarck inspired the occupation by France of Tunis, a district then, as regarded its European colony, predominantly Italian, geographically situated only one hundred miles from Sicily and Sardinia, and with its industry largely financed by Italian capital. Here, as the result of Prussia's benevolent counsels, France established a Protectorate, and at Bizerta created a first-class naval station. This, as was inevitable, and, indeed, as Bismarck had designed, not only imposed upon Italy the necessity of naval and military armaments that almost crippled her financially, but embittered her relations with France for a decade to come. That having been accomplished, the situation in the East needed a somewhat different treatment. The ideals of Russia and Austria in the Balkans were growing increas-



ingly hard to reconcile, and, contemptuously as he still affected to regard her, the menace of a hostile Italy, in the event of an Austro-Russian campaign, had to be considered and, if possible, frustrated. Having artificially secured himself against a Franco-Italian *entente*, the next step, therefore, was to bring Italy into the Austro-German orbit, and here the only method was one of intimidation. Apart from Great Britain, with whom Italian relations had always been instinctively friendly, Italy was now in just the position of dangerous isolation that gave Prussian tactics every promise of success, though these were skilfully masked at first under the Prussian-inspired guise of a friendly advance on the part of Austria.

Thus, soon after the arrangement of the Franco-Tunisian Protectorate, so humiliating to Italy, suggestions began to emanate from Vienna as to the desirability of a visit from King Humbert to the Emperor Joseph. These for a long time were naturally regarded with the utmost suspicion and hesitation by Italian statesmen. But, as in 1870, Italy had to choose between two evils. The visit was accordingly arranged, and took place with apparent temporary success, but a success not so fruitful in immediate results as Prussian diplomacy had anticipated. The rise to power of Gambetta in France, threatening a more vigorous anti-Prussian policy in that country, made it all the more necessary to separate Italy still farther from the possibility of French friendship. The iron hand accordingly had to make itself felt, and characteristically did so in the following way. The inspired Press in Germany suddenly began a campaign of pity for the Pope in his new position, and suggestions were freely ventilated that if he moved to Prussia he would find himself in far more liberal and hospitable surroundings. Not only this, but Prussian representation at the Vatican, which had lapsed for several years, was suddenly revived—the effect upon Italian opinion being precisely what Bismarck had anticipated, and being further strengthened by

his studied indifference and even rudeness to the Italian Ambassador in Berlin, and by public references of the most insolent character to Italy and her Government.

All this could have only one meaning, as Italian statesmen were well aware, and the predicament in which they were placed was such as left them very little choice as to their action. Artificially isolated from their former friend France, financially exhausted, with inadequate armaments, and with a hostile Austria on their disadvantageous frontiers, backed up by a Prussia swollen with robberies from all the States about her, there was but one policy open to them, however distasteful, consistent with the preservation of Italy's young integrity. In 1882, therefore, though it was not made generally public until the following year, Italy entered into the Triple Alliance with Germany and Austria, under terms that remained secret.

An appreciation of Italy's decision to join the Triple Alliance can be reached only if we recall the political conditions of the time. The relations between Great Britain and Italy were of a most friendly character, as they had always been. British statesmen regarded the Triple Alliance with favour, hoping that it would buttress the cause of peace in Europe. Bismarck, moreover, professed that the combination was defensive and not aggressive, and as such—a defensive compact—it was always regarded by the Italians. This is not the occasion for entering into an elaborate explanation of the Imperial Chancellor's policy, but it is apposite to quote a statement generally attributed to him which appeared in the *Hamburger Nachrichten* on June 13, 1890, three months after his dismissal by the Emperor William II., whose policy filled that statesman with forebodings. In the previous year he had stated that he saw in England "an old and traditional ally," and then, after his withdrawal from office, he wrote the following explanation of the place which, in his opinion, Italy filled in the comity of nations:

"The co-operation of Germany, Austria, and Italy threatened no one. The Triple Alliance does not involve dangers which would become fatal to the co-operation of those three States. On the contrary, the Alliance is designed to strengthen the peace of Europe. The *casus fœderis* towards Russia arises only if Russia attacks the territory of one of the two Allies. This limitation deprives the Alliance of all aggressive tendencies, and excludes the possibility that it may serve the special interests of Austria in the Balkan Peninsula, and thus threaten the preservation of peace.

"The Austro-Italian Alliance is not equally favourable. Between Austria and Italy there are unadjusted differences, which are to be found particularly on the side of Italy, such as the anti-Austrian aspirations of the Irredentists. Besides, the Italian Radicals are opposed to the Triple Alliance, and sympathize with France. . . .

"In view of France's aspirations, Italy must be able to rely on the assistance of the English Fleet, for the Triple Alliance cannot protect the Italian coast. Hence, Italy has to think of England, and consideration of England may conceivably limit Italy's freedom of action. The maintenance of the present relations between Austria and Italy must be the principal care of the diplomats, especially as, if Italy for some reason or other should abandon the Triple Alliance, the Austrian Army would be compelled to protect the Dual Monarchy against Italy. Hence it would no longer be able to fulfil Article I. of its Alliance with Germany, according to which it should assist Germany 'with its entire armed power.' By the detachment of Italy the Austro-German Alliance would militarily lose so much that its value would become very problematical.

"If we sum up the considerations developed, we find that the present position is quite satisfactory. As long as Germany, Austria-Hungary, and Italy are united in the Triple Alliance, and as long as these States may reckon on the assistance of the English sea-power, the peace of Europe will not be broken.

"We must take care that friendly relations between Austria and Italy and between Italy and England shall be maintained. Besides, we must see that the Triple

Alliance is restricted to its original scope, and that it is not allowed to serve those special interests which have nothing to do with it. We therefore firmly trust that, as far as Germany is concerned, the 'old course' will be preserved with particular care."

This expression of Bismarck's policy is in line with other statements which he made from time to time. On another occasion he remarked that "England's attitude towards the Triple Alliance depends, not upon the Heligoland Treaty, but upon Italy. If England is opposed to Germany we can never reckon upon Italy's help." Bismarck, in short, realized the many links which connected the great Sea Power of the North with the great Sea Power of the South, and, although he may have had sinister designs at the back of his mind and was never weary of endeavouring to sow discord between country and country, he was in no doubt as to the character of the allegiance which the Italians gave to the Triple Alliance.

## II

This being the origin, then, of the Triple Alliance, it is little to be wondered at, though in outward form it was subsequently renewed, that it was never destined to become a true union of nations possessing a common outlook. Weak as she was, Italy as a united kingdom was the product of men with noble ideals; the child of freedom, she was a democratic nation under a constitutional monarchy. Austria and Prussia, both in their constitutions and their ideals, were diametrically opposed to the new Italy. Bismarck, at any rate, had, as we have seen, no illusions as to the matter. Italy, according to his letters and memoirs, was not to be trusted. Italy might well become friends with France again; Italy, being a Sea Power like Britain, would gravitate towards that country; Italy would never cease to reach after her unredeemed peoples.

These and other suggestions are to be found in his journals and correspondence with his friends; and as years went on it became equally evident, both to Austrian and Italian statesmen, that the Alliance was ultimately doomed. Nor were the reasons far to seek. With the increasing growth and prosperity of the united kingdom of Italy, together with the expansion of its young colonies overseas, the natural and racial movement for the inclusion in it of Italia Irredenta waxed rather than waned, and grew even stronger still, among those populations themselves whom Austrian policy made little attempt to conciliate. Nearly a million strong, and about equally divided between Tyrol, Istria, and Trieste, these people remained in language, culture, and loyalty Italian, the towns of Trento, Rovereto, Fiume, and Trieste being nearly as Italian as any towns in the peninsula itself. Italy's boundaries, too, towards Austria remained ungeographical and ethnically illogical, besides leaving her, from a military standpoint at an extreme disadvantage; while on the Adriatic, as will be shown, she remained peculiarly exposed to Austrian aggression. Every natural advantage was lacking upon her own side that was boasted by the Austrian shores of the Adriatic; Pola, the chief naval port of Austria, was many times more powerful, owing to Nature's unconscious hand, than her own port of Venice. Small wonder, therefore, that when Austria began fortifying her splendid natural harbours on the coast of Dalmatia, thoughtful Italians realized that the Triple Alliance was wearing very thin. In 1906 Signor Pellegrini, in a remarkable book, frankly entitled "*Verso la Guerra?—il dissidio fra Italia e l'Austria*," openly asserted that though nominally an ally, Austria-Hungary was really an enemy, against whom Italy must prepare for war. Upon the Austrian side, in 1911, a high naval officer, Admiral Chiari, prefacing a largely circulated pamphlet on the value of the Austro-Hungarian Navy in the event of a campaign against Italy, warned

his fellow-countrymen that they would no longer meet the sort of army and navy that they had defeated at Novara and Lissa. Nor have events proved him a false prophet. Tragic as have been the circumstances that have witnessed the collapse of an Alliance that from the beginning was always unnatural, they have at any rate shown the world that Italy, not counting the cost, however great in life and wealth, ranged herself side by side with the free nations of the earth, with whom in spirit she was always akin.

### CHAPTER III

#### MODERN ITALY AND THE MEDITERRANEAN

##### I

THE emergence of Italy as a united kingdom not only added a first-class Power to the comity of Europe, but, owing to her unique geographical position, dominating the heart of the Mediterranean, presented the sudden phenomenon of a new maritime nation of great potentialities. With a marine frontier twelve times as extensive as that of France, centrally placed in what Bismarck described as "that wonderful intercontinental harbour of Europe, Asia and Africa, that channel between the Atlantic and the Pacific, that basin which is surrounded by the fairest countries in the world," Italy, as he pointed out, not only stood commandingly on the great communicating seaway between East and West, but possessed in herself the shortest route between Western Europe and the Orient.

Nor was Italian history likely to allow her statesmen to underestimate their new responsibilities. Long before their unity had even become a dream, the various Italian States had by their very position come to realize the extra-

ordinary importance of sea-power for their protection and development and the furtherance of their civilization—symbolized in the gesture, characteristically Latin, with which the Doge of Venice from his barge threw a ring into the sea to signify the wedding of the State with that element from which alone its future life could spring. For many centuries Venice as a Sea Power was second to none in the Mediterranean. Equally enterprising on the west were the seamen of Genoa and Pisa, not only in warfare against the many enemies that the prosperity of these great States had created for them—Turks, Normans, Saracens, and Barbary pirates—but as merchant-adventurers, the pioneers of the great Italian mercantile marine of to-day. Genoese navigators, for example, were the first to use the mariner's compass. It was to a sailor of Genoese origin, Christopher Columbus, that we owe the discovery of the New World, just as it was to his Florentine contemporary, Amerigo Vespucci, that the Americans owe their name. And both these men, to a large extent, derived their primary inspiration from the intrepid travels and masterly observations of the famous Venetian explorer Marco Polo, of 150 years before.

Such were the traditions, a rich endowment, with which modern Italy entered into her heritage. Inevitably and justly, all patriotic Italians looked forward to their sea future. But the difficulties that, from a maritime point of view, Italy's unity had imposed upon her cannot too often or too strongly be emphasized. In the days of their medieval glory Venice and Genoa took thought only of their own comparatively small and easily protected sea-boards. They were often, indeed, confronted by enemies, but the Venetian fleet was not responsible for Calabria. The problem of the defence of the leagues of flat shores on the Western Adriatic was never one that the naval strategists of Genoa had to consider. Sicily and Naples had their separate interests. Their sea purview was necessarily limited. But

for unified Italy the strategical position assumed a far more complex and infinitely more difficult character. And with the Central Powers, as has been shown, though nominally allies, always potential enemies, the whole basis of her naval organization has had within recent years to be orientated afresh and at great disadvantages.

Just as the trend of events imposed upon Great Britain a shifting to the North Sea of her naval concentration, so in Italy it was the Adriatic that gradually began to loom as of paramount importance. It was precisely in the Adriatic that Italy found herself confronted with geographical handicaps of the gravest kind. Thus, throughout its length, the Italian shore of the Adriatic for nearly 500 miles is almost entirely flat and sandy. Bays or natural inlets of the sea capable of defence are practically non-existent. Italy's main railway hugs the coast for a great portion of its length, and lies, consequently, at the mercy of enemy bombardment, and peculiarly open to the attacks of hostile landing-parties. All this applies also to its numerous and populous seaside towns, such as Ancona, Ortona, Bari, etc. Moreover, from north to south, owing to the nature of the coast, an army could easily be landed almost at any point. As a final disadvantage, from the point of view of the weather, there is scarcely a roadstead on the Italian side of the Adriatic that is not exposed to storms from every quarter, and particularly to the Bora, perhaps the most dangerous wind in the Adriatic.

Even with no further handicaps, the very great difficulty of defending such a coast-line would be obvious. But in the case of Italy this was multiplied tenfold by the character of the opposite or Austrian and Albanian shores of the Adriatic. The character of this coast-line is in most respects everything that a naval administration would desire. Dominated by mountains and precipitous cliffs, and masked from the sea by a fringe of rocky islands, lies a succession of natural harbours, many of them with deep



water, and capable at slight expense of being converted into some of the strongest naval ports in existence. Pola and, to a lesser degree, Cattaro, the mountains surrounding the latter overlooking Cetinje, the capital of Montenegro, had already been so fortified before 1914 as to make them almost impregnable from sea attack. Not only so, but most of the outlying islands afford abundant natural anchorage for torpedo or submarine craft, especially favourable to the latter on account of the comparatively deep water in contrast with the shallow shelving bottom on the Italian side. Lastly, it has only to be remembered that at the widest point the Adriatic is little more than 100 miles across, and that the majority of these natural hostile harbours are considerably nearer than this to the Italian coast, for the difficulties of Italy's naval strategists to be, at any rate, partially understood.

So much for the Austrian coast—and to add to the irony of the situation one has only to glance at the names of its principal towns, Pola, Fiume, Sebenico, Spalato, Ragusa, to realize that they are in reality Italian, the ancient colonies of the Venetians. Indeed, in most essential respects they have remained Italian towns until to-day. Of the inhabitants of Trieste, nine-tenths are Italians; and both in Pola and Fiume, or at any rate until the declaration of the present war, the greater portion of the inhabitants were true Italians. No wonder that many Italians still refer longingly, and not without reason, to the Adriatic as “Il mare nostro.” Little less important, too, and in some ways even more so, from the strategical standpoint, is the coast of Albania, completing the western shore of the Adriatic to its entrance at the Straits of Otranto. The chief Albanian ports are Durazzo and Valona, the latter only forty miles distant from Otranto. Towards the control of the whole of this littoral, Austrian policy had long been intriguing. Farther north at Cattaro she already commanded Cetinje, and with the cession to her of Spizza

at the Berlin Congress she also dominated the harbour of Antivari, the only port of Montenegro, which had further been closed to the navies of all nations, the Montenegrins themselves being forbidden to develop it into a naval base. Albania, however, remained disputable ground; and both Durazzo and Valona, and especially the latter, commanding the entrance to the Adriatic, are not only extremely fine natural harbours, but of the utmost strategic significance, as the present war has shown. Until 1916, when it fell into the hands of the Austrians, Durazzo was the chief port of communication between the Western Powers and Montenegro and Serbia; and it was from it that the heroic remnants of the Serbian Army, together with thousands of famished civilian refugees, were convoyed into safety. As regarded Valona, the safety of Italy, and, indeed, of all the *Entente* navies in the Mediterranean, to say nothing of the vital necessity of preserving communications for the hard-pressed Serbians and Montenegrins, demanded its occupation and transformation into a naval base and transport station—a task which fell to the Italian Navy, and which was successfully accomplished in November and December, 1915.

## II

Such is Italy's position as regards the Adriatic, and if stress has been laid upon it, it is only because, as was clearly foreseen and as has been proved to be the case from the strictly naval point of view, it was this branch of her Mediterranean environment that possessed paramount strategic importance. In the waters of the Adriatic her sea fate lay, just as that of Great Britain rested in the North Sea. From other standpoints, however, she has Mediterranean interests no less imperative than those in the Adriatic, and interests that may well in the future assume an even overshadowing significance. Thus, apart from the islands of Sicily and Sardinia, each with an area of over

9,000 square miles, Italy has a chain of colonies on the north and north-eastern coasts of Africa, not only dependent upon maritime communications, but all of them requiring, owing to their position, a full development of naval power.

Of these the nearest is Tripoli—now by rail and sea only two days' journey from Rome—in which for many years Italian capital was sunk. As the result of Ottoman misrule in Tripoli, together with the growing insolence of the Turkish officials towards Italian residents—an insolence which was encouraged by Germany, desirous herself of dominating the country—Italy was forced in 1911 to declare war upon Turkey, and in 1912, as a consequence of her victorious campaign, Tripoli and Cyrenaica definitely passed into her hands, the two being combined into a province, now known as Tripolitania, with an area of some 400,000 square miles, a coast-line of 1,000 miles, and a population of something over a million.

Besides Tripoli, Italy possesses in Eritrea a smaller but potentially very valuable colony, occupying an area of some 90,000 square miles, and with a coast-line of 670 miles upon the Red Sea. Here Italy has various agricultural and mining interests, but, as is also the case in Italian Somaliland, it is believed that the chief prosperity of the colony will in future depend upon cotton. It has, indeed, been estimated that the cotton produced in Eritrea and Italian Somaliland should within a quite brief period of years suffice to supply the whole of Italy's needs in this respect. The third colony to which reference should be made is Italian Somaliland, with an area of about 100,000 square miles, adjoining British East Africa—a colony with which, as it is pleasant to remember, British relations have always been of the friendliest character. The Italian Empire's strength, it must be apparent, rests on sea command.

## CHAPTER IV

## THE MODERN ITALIAN NAVY AND ITS MAKERS

## I

THOUGH disunited, as we have already seen, and, indeed, frequently at war among themselves, the various maritime States of Italy have for many centuries been second to none, both in the seamen bred by them and in the boldness of vision and mechanical ability of their naval and mercantile constructors. Long before Great Britain possessed an official Royal Navy, Italian shipbuilders were world-renowned; and when Henry VIII. began to lay down the foundations of the British Navy as we now know it, he invited Italian ship-constructors to England to give him the benefit of their experience and advice. Italian naval constructors were also among the first to adopt the new device of armour, more than sixty years ago. They have ever since been in the forefront, and in many cases, indeed, actual pioneers, in the matter of design. While that is true, however, the modern Italian Navy may perhaps be said to have had its real birth—or at any rate that stimulus which has now placed it among the great navies of the world—in the catastrophe of Lissa, when, although superior in armament, it was defeated by Admiral Tegethoff in a disaster that every Italian seaman has since burned to revenge. Whatever the future might hold, and faced, as the young kingdom of Italy was, with strategical problems of the greatest complexity, there was to be no second Lissa; and out of that defeat the present Italian Navy may justly be said to have arisen.

Benedetto Brin and Colonel Cuniberti are perhaps the two most eminent figures of the distinguished school of naval architects which has brought the modern Italian Navy to its present strength. Both these men were not only

original thinkers, but alert students of naval progress in other countries, and under their guidance and that of their colleagues, Italian naval construction has always maintained, in spite of financial difficulties and a lack of indigenous coal and iron, an extremely high standard both of workmanship and design. In the matter of the combination, indeed, of those reputedly incompatible qualities in a man-of-war—heavy armament and great speed—Italy may be said to have been almost the first in the field. So long ago as 1877 and 1878, in the *Italia* and the *Lepanto*, she was laying down battleships 400 feet in length and nearly 16,000 tons in displacement, with an armament of four 17-inch 100-ton guns, of Armstrong design, protected by 19-inch armour, and with an estimated speed of 18 knots. These ships were built at a time when the largest British vessel building was H.M.S. *Inflexible*, 320 feet in length, with a displacement of 11,400 tons, carrying four 80-ton guns, and with an estimated speed of only 14 knots.

These Italian ships were followed by the *Ruggiero di Lauria*, the *Francesco Morosini*, and the *Andrea Doria*, which came into service in the years 1888, 1890, and 1891 respectively, each of over 11,000 tons, each with an armament of four 105-ton guns and four 6-inch guns, and each with a speed of 17 to 18 knots. This idea, indeed, of combining, in so far as this was possible, the elements of great gun-power and speed seems to have dominated the imagination of the Italian constructors; and in 1901 the first of the *Vittorio Emanuele* class was designed and laid down. These remarkable vessels, which, at the time of their construction, possessed a larger range of action than contemporary battleships, were built not only to carry two 12-inch and twelve 8-inch guns, but to attain the great speed, for those days, of  $21\frac{1}{2}$  knots.

The life of any naval type, at any rate during the last two decades, has been brief. And it is interesting to note that the English *Dreadnought*, which was destined to effect

such a revolution in modern naval construction, found an eloquent prophet, in 1903, in Colonel Cuniberti, the gifted designer of the *Vittorio Emanuele* class, when, in an article which created widespread attention and excited much criticism, he first boldly advocated the adoption of an all-big-gun policy. It was not, however, until the four battleships or armoured cruisers (in the Italian Navy they were always classed together) of the *Vittorio Emanuele* class, were in service—namely, the *Regina Elena*, the *Vittorio Emanuele*, the *Napoli*, and the *Roma*—that the *Dante Alighieri*, the first Italian all-big-gun vessel, was laid down in 1909 at Castellamare. By this time the Italian Navy had already reached very considerable proportions. At the beginning of 1909 Italy had eleven modern battleships afloat, of which nine were complete; ten armoured cruisers built or building, the oldest of which had been launched sixteen years previously; seventeen destroyers less than twelve years old; about one hundred and twenty-five torpedo-boats of various classes; and six submarines. She was spending annually upon the navy a sum of five and a half million pounds. Side by side with this there had also been an immense development of her manufacturing resources and shipyards—her engine-shops, gun-factories, and steel-works. For the primary expansion of these, under grave difficulties, much credit must be given to the foresightedness of Count Cavour, and later to the industry and driving power of Benedetto Brin. Not only have the Italian Government yards been enormously extended in recent years, but both private and friendly foreign enterprise have been vigorously encouraged, as witness the Vickers-Terni works at Spezia, the Armstrong gun-factory at Pozzuoli, and the Pattison works at Naples—all of British origin, as well as the Ansaldo Company's works at Genoa, employing 40,000 workmen, and the Odero and Orlando establishments at Leghorn. These have not only sufficed for Italy's needs, but have produced ships for various foreign

countries, including the armoured cruisers *Nisshin* and *Kasuga*, ordered by the Argentine Government and bought by Japan on the eve of the Russo-Japanese War, which were notably successful, both in the battle of Tsushima and the blockade of Port Arthur. Finally, no account of Italian naval development would be complete without a reference to Senator Marconi, who first gave to the world syntonic wireless telegraphy in practical and commercial form, the introduction of which into the world's navies has had such a profound effect upon modern naval tactics.

Nor have the coast defences been neglected, although Italy's strategy was still based then on the Western Mediterranean rather than upon the Adriatic. For naval purposes the country had been divided into three maritime zones, administered respectively from Spezia—the most important of Italy's naval bases—Naples, and Venice, with secondary naval stations at various strategic points such as Taranto and Brindisi, which have been largely developed during the present war; Maddalena in Sardinia, Ancona, Augusta, on the east coast of Sicily; and elsewhere.

As to personnel, the Italian Government has always had splendid material in its maritime population, the seamen being recruited by conscription, but the petty officers forming a whole-life force, trained from early boyhood. The total numbers amounted at this time to about 50,000.

## II

Such, then, was the Italian Navy, when, as the result of Turkish misrule and the repeated insults to Italian residents in Tripoli, it became clear to the Italian Government that its former policy of peaceful development should be abandoned. Representations to the Ottoman Government had been made on several occasions, but had led to no satisfactory result. the persecution of Italian subjects, both in Tripoli itself and in the Red Sea ports, became aggravated. At length their general expulsion, together with a boycott of Italian

commerce, was being openly threatened in the Turkish newspapers. As the result of this conduct on the part of the Turks, an ultimatum was sent to Constantinople, which expired on September 29, 1911, and it became clear in the ensuing state of war that the modern Italian Navy was to be put upon its first trial. Nor, in its main features and upon an infinitely smaller scale, of course, could the campaign that followed have rehearsed more exactly the far greater one that was to come four years later, or afforded to the world at large so convincing an example of the vital importance of sea-power.

In both cases, though Italy designedly strove to limit the field of operations, large military forces had to be transported overseas and munitioned and provisioned from a distance. In both cases it was essential for the line of sea communications to be kept open. And in both cases, as it turned out, the opposing enemy fleet kept its capital ships in fortified harbours. The Tripoli campaign afforded an admirable opportunity for Italy's Navy to test the efficiency of all the skill and labour that had been expended upon it. And it may be said at once that both in its mobilization and its initial strategy, in its general disposition as well as in its technical handling during the progress of the war, it won the respect of all qualified technical observers.

As in the case of most wars, the coming storm had cast its shadow before it, and within a few hours of the declaration of war the Adriatic Division, under the Duke of Abruzzi, was already blockading the Albanian coast, and had set on fire and stranded a Turkish torpedo-boat trying to escape from Prevesa. Had good use been made of these Albanian ports by raiders skilfully handled, very considerable losses might easily have been inflicted upon Italian commerce as well as upon her transports. But, as matters were, the Duke of Abruzzi's division had cleared the coast within three weeks, and was patrolling the Ionian and Aegean Seas before the end of October.



To this division fell the honour of firing the first shots of the war; it was one of six forming the fleet under the Commander-in-Chief, the late Vice-Admiral Aubry, who held also the command of the first squadron, consisting of two divisions, while the remaining two divisions formed the second squadron, under Vice-Admiral Faravelli.

According to strategical plans already thoroughly rehearsed, these forces went to sea in three main divisions: one, as we have seen, clearing the Adriatic; one searching out the main body of the Turkish fleet in Syrian waters; and the third undertaking the blockade of the Tripoli coast. So swiftly had these dispositions been made, and so efficiently were the various divisions handled, that within a few days the fleet of Turkey had been driven from the open seas, her communications with Tripoli cut, and those of Italy secured, and the safe transport of the expeditionary force been made possible. On September 29 war had been declared; on October 4 Admiral Aubry, with part of the first squadron, landed a brigade of marines at Marsa Tobruk, on the Cyrenaican coast, a harbour that was immediately fortified, and which subsequently proved of the utmost use both as a coaling and wireless station and as a centre of future operations; and by October 10 a battalion of infantry, together with engineers and artillery, had been safely transported.

Meanwhile the second squadron, to which had been allotted the occupation of Tripoli itself and the blockade of the coast, had on October 3 begun the bombardment of the forts. Before that step was taken a demand for surrender was made and refused; three days were allowed for the evacuation of the foreign population, at whose disposal sufficient passenger steamers had been placed by the Italian Government. Far outranged by the heavy guns of the Italian battleships and armoured cruisers, the forts had been silenced by the bombardment, which began at 3.15 p.m., by sunset, the destruction of Fort Hamidieh being completed

the next day, after its guns had opened fire on an Italian destroyer sent in to reconnoitre the harbour. On October 5 a naval garrison of 2,000 men was landed, and the Italian flag hoisted at Fort Sultanieh to the salutes of the whole fleet. The way was now clear for the convoying of the expeditionary force. This task was again admirably handled, 100,000 men being disembarked in Tripoli, apart from a very large amount of food and equipment. Among this may be mentioned 12,000 oxen, 70,000 tons of drinking-water, 25,000 tons of barley, 15,000 horses, and 400 guns—the whole being transported in 152 sailings and in less than sixty steamers. On October 16 Derna was bombarded, being occupied the next day by a naval detachment. Homs was attacked the same day. Benghazi was bombarded and occupied on October 19, and Homs fell on the 21st. The navy's chief work for the rest of the year consisted in the maintenance of the blockade and the very delicate and arduous task of dealing with contraband, together with the support, when possible, of land operations.

Mention must also be made of the work in the Red Sea, where it was believed at one time that an attack on Eritrea was imminent. The forts of Mocka and Sheikh Said, at the southern end of the Red Sea, were bombarded in November, as well as the town of Akaba in the Gulf of Sinai. A strict patrol of the Red Sea was also maintained for the purpose of preventing the passage of Turkish reinforcements into Africa. It was in the Red Sea that one of the most brilliant little light cruiser and destroyer actions of the whole war was fought off Kunfida on January 7. It had become known to the Italian officer in command that a number of Turkish gun-boats were hiding in the internal canals of the Farsan Islands, and that a considerable body of troops were occupying Loheia, Fort Midi, and Kunfida. He decided upon an operation, therefore, that, with careful synchronizing, would, he hoped, enable him to capture or destroy all these vessels; and he adopted the following plan of cam-

paign: After a bombardment by the cruisers *Calabria* and *Puglia* of the Turkish camp at Jebel Tahr, he despatched the *Piemonte*, the *Garibaldino*, and the *Artigliere* along the coast from Jeddah to the internal canal of the Farsan Islands, passing before Lith, and so towards the south. Then, after the bombardment of Jebel Tahr, he ordered the *Puglia* and *Calabria* to bombard and destroy Loheia and Fort Midi. In this they were successful, and in the meantime the *Piemonte*, the *Garibaldi*, and the *Artigliere*, had located and were pursuing the seven gun-boats and an armed yacht to Kunfida. Some of these gun-boats, upon sighting the Italian destroyers, had fled, but others opened fire at a range of about 5,000 yards upon the *Artigliere*, which, upon being supported by the *Piemonte* and *Garibaldino*, joined action with the gun-boats, as well as with the land batteries which were supporting these ships. After a three hours' fight, the whole seven were destroyed and the yacht captured, while as a further consequence of the action Kunfida itself was abandoned.

But even more brilliant, if productive of less conspicuous military results, was the torpedo-raid of July 18 into the Dardanelles, where the main Turkish fleet was believed to be hiding. At midnight on July 18 a torpedo flotilla under Captain Enrico Millo set out. Captain Millo succeeded in entering the Straits without being discovered, and had approached as far as Kephez Point, when one of his boats was caught by a searchlight. The shore batteries at once opened fire. In spite of this, however, he proceeded on his course until the lines of the fleet became visible beyond Kilid Bahr. Here, twelve miles from the mouth, the *Spica*, the torpedo-boat in which Captain Millo was leading his flotilla, struck one of the steel cables of the boom which had been placed there. He and his little flotilla were now in full view of the enemy fleet, exposed to the glare of all its searchlights, and subject to a tornado of fire, not only from the fleet itself, but from the large number of shore batteries. Having

reconnoitred the position of the Turkish fleet, and satisfied himself that, as things were, it was impossible to launch any of his torpedoes effectively, Captain Millo ordered the withdrawal of his flotilla—a manœuvre that was carried out with complete coolness and presence of mind, the whole of his ships returning intact and but slightly damaged to join the destroyers which, at the entrance of the Straits, had meanwhile engaged the forts.

The operations during the rest of the Tripoli campaign may be summed up, so far as the Italian Navy was concerned, as a matter of demonstrations—the fleet bombarded the Dardanelles forts with great spirit, but failed to draw the Turkish fleet out of the Straits; the occupation of certain islands, including Rhodes, the operations for seizing which were admirably directed by Vice-Admiral Amero; that officer also organized the landing of the troops under the command of General Ameglio, which defeated and captured the garrison of Phytos; the maintenance of communications between the expeditionary forces and the home bases in Italy; and, where possible, the assistance of the land campaign by gun-fire from the sea.

### III

During the course of the Libyan campaign the Italian Navy not only justified the care and forethought that had been bestowed upon it for so many years, but maintained a consistently high standard in the varied operations that it was called upon to undertake. Few of these were sensational, but they were none the less important. Upon their success and efficiency the whole campaign rested, and the final review at Naples of the whole fleet, by King Victor Emmanuel III., expressed the consciousness of the Italian nation of the immense services that it had rendered. It is interesting to note that the Admiral then in command, Admiral Viale, was Minister of Marine in May, 1915, when Italy entered the present war on the side of the *Entente*, his

immediate predecessor having been Rear-Admiral Enrico Millo, the hero of the raid on the Dardanelles.

Of the exact numbers and equipment of the Italian Navy when Italy actually entered the present conflict it would not, perhaps, be discreet now to speak. But an idea of its strength in the earlier months of the European War may be conveyed by the following brief résumé of the naval forces which were at Italy's command.

These consisted of fourteen battleships in actual commission, of which six were of the Dreadnought type; others were on the slip or in various stages of completion. The oldest battleship of the Dreadnought type was the *Dante Alighieri*, launched in 1910 and completed two years later. On a displacement of 19,400 tons, she was given an armament of twelve 12-inch guns, disposed in four triple turrets, in which respect she was a pioneer, as well as twenty 4.7-inch guns and twelve 3-inch guns. Her speed was nearly 24 knots, being over 2 knots faster than the first British Dreadnought. The next to be completed, the *Giulio Cesare* and the *Leonardo da Vinci*, were also very remarkable vessels. Each had a displacement of 22,340 tons, a length of 557 feet, a beam of 92 feet, a draught of 28 feet, and 34,000 indicated horse-power, the *Giulio Cesare* being constructed in the Ansaldo yard at Sestri-Ponente, and the *Leonardo da Vinci* at the Odero yard, Genoa. Each had four propellers driven by three groups of Parson's turbines, and was designed to attain a speed of nearly 23 knots. It was in the disposition, however, of their main armament that they were somewhat in the nature of an experiment. This consisted of thirteen 12-inch guns mounted in five turrets, three 3-gun turrets being placed forward, aft, and amidships, and two 2-gun turrets so raised that their guns could fire either over the forward or aft turrets. This arrangement ensured a broadside fire from thirteen guns with a forward and astern fire of five guns. Each of these ships also carried eighteen 4.7-inch guns and

sixteen 3-inch guns. With regard to armour, their water-line belt was 9 inches thick amidships, diminishing to  $4\frac{1}{2}$  inches forward and aft. Their turrets were protected by  $9\frac{1}{2}$ -inch armour, and the 4.7-inch guns by  $4\frac{3}{4}$ -inch armour. They carried 1,000 tons of coal and oil, and their complement of men and officers was just under 1,000. To this class also belonged the *Conte di Cavour*, built at Spezia and launched in 1911. The next two to be laid down were the *Caio Duilio* and the *Andrea Doria*, the latter, at Italy's entry into the war, being not quite complete. Both these vessels were improvements upon the *Conte di Cavour* class. Each had a displacement of over 23,000 tons, was 570 feet in length, 91 feet in beam, 29 feet in draught, with an indicated horse-power of 24,000. Parson's turbines were installed. The *Caio Duilio* was built at Castellamare and the *Andrea Doria* at Spezia. They were given armoured belts of  $10\frac{1}{2}$  inches, diminishing to 6 inches, and each carried thirteen 12-inch, sixteen 6-inch, and eighteen 3-inch guns, and their sides were pierced for four submerged torpedo-tubes. They were designed to attain a speed of 23 knots, and their complement was over 1,000.

Apart from these most modern ships, Italy possessed the powerful pre-Dreadnought battleships, upon which she had relied throughout the whole of the Tripoli campaign, which have already been described. Turning to armoured cruisers, Italy on the outbreak of war had ten, of which the most effective were the *Amalfi*, built by the Odero firm at Genoa, and the *Pisa*, built by Orlando at Leghorn, with a displacement of nearly 10,000 tons, an armament of four 10-inch, eight 7.5-inch, and sixteen 3-inch guns, three submerged torpedo-tubes, and a speed of 23 knots; and the *San Giorgio* and *San Marco*, also of nearly 10,000 tons displacement, and each carrying four 10-inch, eight 7.5-inch, sixteen 3-inch, and eight 1.8-inch guns, with four submerged torpedo-tubes, and a speed of  $22\frac{1}{2}$  knots.

Coming to light cruisers and scouts, the building of

which, as in practically all navies, had been rather neglected in recent years, Italy had sixteen, of which the *Libia*, the *Nino Bixio*, the *Quarto*, and the *Marsala* were the most important. These were practically sister ships, each having a displacement of about 3,400 tons, a length of from 432 to 460 feet, a beam of about 42 feet, and an indicated horsepower of 22,000 in the case of the *Nino Bixio* and the *Marsala*, and 29,000 in that of the *Quarto*. Each mounted six 4·7-inch and six 12-pounder guns, and carried mining equipment, besides having three above-water torpedo-tubes. These fine ships were given two groups of Parson's turbines; eight were driven by liquid fuel, two being for mixed stoking. The *Quarto* was capable of carrying 425 tons of oil and 25 tons of coal, the *Nino Bixio* and *Marsala* having a considerably larger capacity. These vessels were designed for a speed of nearly 29 knots. During the war Italy has commissioned a most valuable class of scouts or big destroyers; they are of high speed and heavily armed in proportion to their size.

Italy was well provided with torpedo-boats and destroyers. She had nearly fifty destroyers built or building, twenty of them having a maximum speed of 35 knots; and nearly seventy first-class torpedo-boats were included in the Navy, the majority of both of these classes having been built, or being in course of construction, at the Pattison Works at Naples, or the Odero or Ansaldo yards at Genoa or Sestri-Ponente. Among the most recent destroyers were those belonging to the well-known *Indomito Intrepido* class, built by Messrs. Pattison at Naples, all of them being oil-fuel vessels. They were designed with a length of about 250 feet, a beam of 24 feet, and a draught of 7 feet, with a displacement of 680 tons, 15,000 indicated horse-power, and a maximum trial speed of over 35 knots. Fine sea boats and well armed, they were given an armament of one 4·7-inch and four 14-pounder guns, with two torpedo-tubes; the fuel capacity was 100 tons. In addition to these

mosquito craft, Italy had twenty submarines in commission and several others of a larger type building, three naval airships, and numerous sea-planes, the numbers of all of which have since, of course, been very considerably increased.

The construction of these great and powerful additions to Italy's fleet involved, as was only to be expected, a very largely increased expenditure upon her navy, and from about £5,000,000 in 1909 the Estimates rose in 1913 to very nearly treble this—namely, the sum of £13,333,000. £2,500,000 of this was due, however, to the cost of the naval operations in the Tripoli campaign. In 1914 the sum had slightly diminished to £10,313,000. As against this Austria-Hungary, at the outbreak of war, had approximately the following naval establishment: Four Dreadnoughts built and three projected, with a combined displacement of over 150,000, and six effective pre-Dreadnought battleships. She had also six coast-defence vessels, two armoured and five protected cruisers, eighteen destroyers, thirty-nine torpedo-boats, and six submarines; the submarine flotillas were soon to be largely reinforced from German sources. Her total naval personnel amounted to about 24,000 all told.

## CHAPTER V

### THE ITALIAN NAVY IN THE GREAT WAR: FIRST PHASE

#### I

THESE, then, were the approximate naval forces at Italy's disposal during the critical months before she finally severed her connection with the Triple Alliance. Though with such issues before her as had by then become clear, and with a racial and national history so fundamentally opposed to everything that Germany and Austria stood for, it was almost inevitable that sooner or later she would find



her alliance with them wholly impossible, yet it cannot too often be remembered how enormous were the difficulties that her decision to join the *Entente* imposed upon her. Owing to the assiduity of German commercial enterprise, in contrast with the inertia of British and French business men, not only had German capital financed innumerable and widespread Italian industries, but the Italian banking system was almost entirely under German control. At the outbreak of war Germany exercised commanding influence in Italian industries by her practical monopoly of the Italian markets both for machinery and chemical productions, many Italian industries depending on these factors having thus passed more or less directly under German control, or being forced to employ German technical experts. Half of Italy's imports, for example, of spinning machinery were of German manufacture. Two-thirds of her imported textile equipment had the same origin. Three-fifths at least of her imported machine tools were supplied by German firms, together with two-thirds of her imported dynamos and other electrical apparatus.\* For many of the essential parts, too, of her own unfinished products, Italy was entirely dependent upon German enterprise. Of such essentials as potash, of which Italy is naturally destitute, almost the whole of her supply was drawn from Germany. Another factor of which too little note, perhaps, has been taken by Italy's Allies was the important consideration to her that the vast bulk of her industries were concentrated in the north—namely, in the very zone most likely to be exposed to invasion or the disorganization of war. In these regions were centred not only 64 per cent. of her industrial workers, but also 65 per cent. of her industrial motive power. Nor is that all. Of her annual profit from agriculture in 1913, that drawn from the north was equal

\* It may be interesting to state here that even some of the splendid dynamos constructed in Italy were bought by Germans and sent back under German labels.

in amount to the whole combined profit produced by Central and Southern Italy. Of the three main sources of her agricultural wealth, wheat, maize, and wine, Northern Italy was responsible for 46 per cent. of the total production. It is no exaggeration to say, therefore—and Italian statesmen had to face this fact—that in going to war Italy was exposing to its possible operations the very heart of the manufacturing life of the country. The temptation to keep “out of the ring” was great. Germany and Austria were willing to make considerable concessions to secure Italy’s neutrality. As they were forced to admit by the incisive logic of Baron Sonnino, who had succeeded the Marquis di San Giuliano as Minister for Foreign Affairs, Austria, by the invasion of Serbia, in whose prosperity and independence Italy was concerned, had already infringed one of the Articles of the Treaty upon which the Triple Alliance had been founded. It had been agreed that neither Austria nor Italy was to occupy, either permanently or temporarily, any Balkan territory without previous arrangement between them. In the events that primarily led to the outbreak of the European War, and in the actual invasion of Serbia, Italy had never been consulted.

The bold stand of Baron Sonnino, together with his unanswerable logic, not only brought Prince Bulow hot-foot to Rome, but set in motion, with all the wiles at Germany’s command, every activity of Teutonic intrigue. Large concessions were offered as the price of Italy’s non-interference, and, as was to be expected, these found favour with a certain section of public opinion naturally averse from any war on account of its perils, never calculable. So strong were these advocates of a passive policy for a time that on May 13, 1915, Signor Salandra, the Italian Premier, tendered his resignation, which the King, however, refused to accept, to the general relief of the great majority of the nation, who now saw clearly that what lay before their country was no mere driving of a political bargain, but a decision

of conscience going to the very roots of human nature. On May 20, 1915, the Italian Parliament, by an almost unanimous vote, accorded the Government full powers of action, should war eventuate. A general mobilization was ordered on May 22, and on May 23 Italy declared war upon Austria.

Italy cannot be accused of any ideas of self-aggrandizement in this declaration. If her Irredentist claims awoke to new life, it must be remembered that they had never been abandoned. They had always persisted, indeed, as a powerful racial call, the desire of the parent stock for union with its legitimate offspring, and the bitter resentment of that offspring itself towards the foreign yoke under which it lived. In the words of the well-known Italian Member of Parliament, the Hon. Salvatore Barzilai, himself a native of Trieste, "no thought of Imperialism was leading Italy on, but her pressing need both for liberty and defence." It must further be remembered, too, that at the time of Italy's intervention she was not joining the obviously winning side. The vast Russian retreat under the blows of Mackensen had begun; the British forces in the Ypres salient were being hard pressed; the expedition to Gallipoli, which had already cost heavy casualties, showed no signs of a triumphant conclusion. That Italy believed in the ultimate victory of the *Entente* is certain, but that she joined the Allies at such a moment will always redound to her honour.

## II

Of the full results of that momentous choice the future alone will be able to supply an estimate. Magnificent as they have already been, they have not yet been finally revealed. But it will be understood with what profound satisfaction, apart from the endorsement furnished thereby of the justice of their cause, the *Entente* Powers welcomed the addition to their naval forces of a fleet so technically

efficient, with recent war experience, and with a personnel ardent and well trained and with intimate local knowledge.

Prior to Italy's entrance the policing, not only of the Mediterranean, but of the Adriatic, had fallen to the French and British navies alone, whose responsibilities elsewhere were great and pressing. When, on the midnight of Sunday, May 23, 1915, Italy's fleet came to their assistance, *Entente* seamen at once appreciated the value of the contribution thus made to victory. It is impossible here and now to describe in detail the many and invaluable operations undertaken during the last three years by the Italian Navy. But an effort must be made to indicate something of the nature of those preliminary operations that were imposed upon it, and that were so essential to the freeing of the Adriatic and *Ægean* seaways for the vast amount of transport soon so imperatively necessary, not only on the ground of military exigencies, but of sheer humanitarianism.

That immediately on the outbreak of war a series of raids might take place, had, of course, been generally anticipated, and the peculiar difficulties of Italy in this respect have been sufficiently indicated in previous chapters. The comparatively recent shifting, too, of her naval concentration from the Western Mediterranean to the Adriatic had left her with no suitable and defended base on those shores between points so far apart as Venice and Brindisi. The first phase of Italian intervention, then, may be described as that of a series of raids and counter-raids; the rapid and ingenious development of coast defences; and the establishment of effective patrols. A chronological record of the salient features of this early period will best illustrate both what Italy had to contend against and the degree of success that rewarded her defensive and offensive measures.

On May 23, 1915, the Minister of Marine was Admiral Viale, who had held the chief command of the Italian fleet in the later stages of the Tripoli campaign, and who had

been its Commander-in-Chief at the great review in Naples Bay in November, 1912, symbolizing the country's gratitude for the part which the navy had played. Unfortunately, Admiral Viale, owing to ill-health, was compelled to relinquish his post in September, and was succeeded by Vice-Admiral Camillo Corsi.\* This officer had acted as Chief of Staff to Admiral Viale during the Tripoli campaign.

The Commander-in-Chief of the Italian Navy for the first two and a half years of the war was the first-cousin of the King, the Duke of Abruzzi, naval officer, mountaineer, and Arctic explorer, who had rendered conspicuous service in the Tripoli campaign. It was amidst universal regret that, after two and a half years, reasons of health compelled him to give up the strenuous duties that he had carried out so admirably. He was succeeded by Vice-Admiral Count Thaon di Revel, who had been for two years Chief of the Naval Staff and responsible for the naval defences of Venice. This officer also had seen distinguished service during the Libyan War, when he had commanded the Second Division of the Second Squadron. He had been in charge of the naval detachment that demonstrated before the Dardanelles and sank two Turkish ships at Beyrout in Syria. In all these officers, as in Vice-Admiral Cutinelli, who commanded the fleet after the retirement of the Duke of the Abruzzi until Admiral Thaon di Revel finally took charge, both Italy and the Allies were fortunate in having at their disposal capable and resolute men with invaluable experience of actual naval warfare.

War was declared at midnight, and the next day a number of Austrian men-of-war bombarded Ancona, achieving little military damage, but destroying a considerable amount of civilian property. This action was made notable on the

\* This Admiral, with Rear-Admiral Marzolo, represented Italy at the naval conference in London in January, 1917, when many important decisions were made.

Italian side by the enterprise of the submarine *Foca*, which, single-handed, moved out against the Austrian fleet, apparently causing the ships to abandon their purpose. At the same time the coast towns of Porto Recanati, Rimini, Manfredonia, Barletta, and Bari, were also fired upon, this being the only occasion during the whole war when anything like a concerted fleet movement on the part of the Austrians can be said to have been undertaken. At these places, again, very little naval or military damage was caused. At Barletta two Italian destroyers were encountered and brought to action; one of them succeeded in escaping. the other, the *Turbine*, after a most gallant action, was destroyed. This little vessel, of 330 tons, dating from 1901, was at the time engaged upon scouting duties. Sighting an enemy destroyer, she had at once given chase, thereby detaching herself from her consorts of the naval patrol. After chasing the enemy destroyer for about half an hour, three more enemy destroyers and a cruiser were encountered. By this time the *Turbine* had been hit twice in her boiler room, and soon afterwards was set on fire. But with the greatest courage she continued to fight a rearguard action for yet another hour. Her ammunition being then exhausted, her commander ordered the sea-cocks to be opened in order to sink the vessel, and thereby prevent her capture. Although she was now obviously sinking and had ceased to fire, the enemy still continued to shell her at close range. Commander Bianchi, who had been wounded early in the action, gave orders for his crew to jump into the sea, and nine of these heroic men were rescued by the naval detachment to which the *Turbine* had belonged.

On the same day, May 24, the intrepid spirit animating the Italian destroyer flotillas was well illustrated by the action of the *Zeffiro*, a boat of 325 tons, built by the Pattison firm in 1904, in penetrating into the harbour of Porto Buso in the Gulf of Trieste. Here she caused great damage to the quays, and she also sank several motor-boats, the

commanding officer of the group and fifty men surrendering and being brought back as prisoners. On May 26 a blockade was formally declared by the Italian Government of the whole Austro-Hungarian coast from the Italian frontier, including all its islands, harbours, gulfs, channels and bays, and also of the Albanian shore, from the frontier of Montenegro to Cape Kiephali on the south. The opportunity had come for the Italian air forces to lend invaluable aid for the first time. On May 27 a naval airship, the M 2, bombed the Austrian harbour of Sebenico, as well as some destroyers that she sighted near the mouth of the River Kerka. On May 30 another airship bombed the dockyard at Pola, damaging the railway, and, so it was reported, the Austrian battleship *Erzherzog Franz Ferdinand*. On May 31 two destroyers made a reconnaissance into the harbour of Monfalcone, and shelled various military objects, including the electric power station. On June 1 Italy's armoured cruisers made a demonstration on the coast of Dalmatia, but failed to come into touch with any hostile forces. The semaphore and wireless stations on the island of Lissa were, however, again destroyed—again, because this had already once been accomplished by the French Navy during November, 1914—the Austrians having in the meantime rebuilt them. An observation station on the island of Curzola was attacked on the same day. In this dramatic way the Italian Navy began to co-operate with the Allies.

On June 5 the cables between the mainland and the islands of the Dalmatian Archipelago were cut, and various observation stations and lighthouses on these islands were destroyed. On the same day the little island of Pelagosa in the mid-Adriatic was bombarded, as also was the railway between Cattaro and Ragusa, the latter being much damaged. On June 7 some light cruisers bombarded Monfalcone, setting the castle of Duino on fire, and silencing one of three batteries in the vicinity. Two days later,

on June 9, a combined military and naval attack on this town took place. With the help of gunfire from the sea it was soon rendered untenable, and fell into the hands of the Italians on the following day, its capture being rapidly followed by that of Porto Rosega, three miles to the south, thereby placing in Italian possession a very valuable shipyard district. On June 12 the destroyer *Zeffiro* again gained distinction, making a gallant attempt to wreck the Austrian aerodrome at Parenzo. Unfortunately, upon her arrival the place was wrapped in fog, thereby rendering accurate gunfire extremely difficult. The commander of the *Zeffiro*, however, decided, in spite of this, to enter the harbour, where, perceiving three Austrian soldiers upon the quay, he landed a small party to capture them. Two succeeded, however, in escaping and giving the alarm to the city, whereupon the shore batteries opened a fierce fire upon the *Zeffiro*. The latter, however, succeeded, in spite of the activity developed by the enemy and the unfavourable atmospheric conditions, in locating and inflicting considerable damage upon the aerodrome, besides obtaining very useful information. On June 17 Italy lost her first submarine, the *Medusa*, with all her crew except five, who were taken prisoners by the Austrians. The incident was of some note as being, it was believed, the first time that two submarines had fought each other. On June 18 a small Austrian detachment attacked the Italian coast towns of Rimini, Pesaro, and Fano; it was a tip-and-run raid, and the enemy succeeded in escaping without loss.

On July 4 a successful raid by an Italian airship was made upon the great arsenal and shipyard of the Stabilimento Tecnico at Trieste, where several bombs were dropped and serious damage inflicted, the airship returning safely. These works were again raided three days later, on July 7, when a very large fire was caused by the aerial bombardment. It was on this day, however, that a rather serious loss to the Italian Navy was sustained by the torpedoing



of the armoured cruiser *Amalfi* while undertaking a reconnaissance in the Upper Adriatic. The *Amalfi*, which was a comparatively modern vessel, having been completed in 1909 at the Odero works at Genoa, had a displacement of nearly 10,000 tons, a speed of  $23\frac{1}{2}$  knots, an armament of four 10, eight 7.5, and sixteen 3-inch guns, and three submerged torpedo-tubes. She was thus a valuable unit; 70 of her complement of nearly 700 were lost.

A few days later the gallant *Zeffiro* again came into prominence, when, with a flotilla of Italian destroyers, she again attacked, and this time destroyed, the aerodrome at Parenzo. This success was overshadowed on July 18, when another disaster befell the Italian Navy in the loss of the armoured cruiser *Garibaldi*, an older vessel than the *Amalfi*; but still a useful unit of the fleet. The *Garibaldi* formed part of a detachment that had been bombarding the railway near Cattaro, and had herself succeeded in inflicting considerable damage. All along the coast she had opened fire on batteries, and had so greatly damaged the railway between Cattaro and Ragusa, near which she was sunk, that all traffic had to be discontinued over this route for nearly a month. She was torpedoed, as was afterwards discovered, by the Austrian submarine U 4, one of a number of submarines which were simultaneously attacking her. Although rapidly sinking, her crew and commander gallantly stuck to their posts, while her gunners continued firing until the last possible moment. Their gallant persistence was rewarded, U 5 being sunk before the great Italian ship herself disappeared beneath the water. Happily, of her crew of 540, nearly 500 were saved by destroyers which steamed to the scene in answer to her wireless calls for help.

The Austro-Hungarian Navy was still intent on tip-and-run raids, and on July 19 the little town of Monopoli was wantonly bombarded. The Italian authorities determined on a more rigorous control of the sea in order the better to deal with such outrages. Four days later, on July 23, the

whole of the Adriatic was formally declared closed to merchant vessels of all countries except such as were bound to Italian or Montenegrin ports and carried a permit from the Italian Minister of War. The Adriatic thus became a controlled military area like the North Sea. On July 26, as the result of an extremely well-planned and daring action, the little island of Pelagosa, to which we have already referred, was occupied by Italian naval forces. It had become clear for some time that this island was being made use of by the Austrians, both as a signal station for patrols and also as a base for submarines. On the night of the 26th, therefore, it was decided to carry it, and as the result of a skilful disposition this was successfully done. On July 27 the Austrians made yet another of their fruitless tip-and-run raids, this time bombarding Senigallia, where the chief damage was suffered by a home for sailors. On August 5 Italy lost her first naval airship, the *Città di Jesi*, as the result of hostile anti-aircraft fire while raiding Pola. The airship was brought down in the sea, her crew being taken prisoner by the Austrians. On August 11 the loss of the submarine *Medusa* was avenged in the destruction of the Austrian submarine U 12 in the Northern Adriatic, that vessel being sunk with all hands.

Meanwhile, however, it was becoming clear that, with the increasing demands upon Italian transports, owing to the victualling of the armies and civilian populations of Montenegro and Serbia, together with the very limited supply of patrol craft at Italy's disposal, further measures were becoming imperative for the effectual defence of her long coastline. It was accordingly decided to make use of a number of armoured trains, whose action as coast defenders would be very considerably helped by the fact that the main railway from Ravenna to Brindisi hugged the coast almost throughout its length. The necessary action was swiftly taken, and with conspicuous success. These armoured trains were placed under naval control, and manned by

marines, and were so distributed that they could easily be assembled at any spot at which an enemy attack was expected. Each train was provided with heavy and anti-aircraft guns, was labelled in big letters "For King and Country" and, in fact, became the ship of its crew, consisting of about seventy seamen and officers. Rifle-rooms and kitchens, observation rooms and comfortable cabins, were provided in each train, which was capable of opening fire within forty seconds while still steaming. The life on the train was one of strict discipline, the day being divided as methodically as on board ship, with periods of sentry-go, drilling, school, meals, and rest. A typical incident illustrating the value of this very ingenious method of coast defence occurred on November 5, 1916, when three enemy destroyers were signalled at dawn just south of Ancona off Sant Elpidio al Mare. An armoured train was at once despatched to the spot, and its gun-fire was so effective that the enemy was obliged to beat a hasty retreat. Two of the destroyers were hit, one of them having a heavy list as she disappeared, escorted by the others. No damage was caused to the train itself, and since then the Austrian raids against the undefended coast towns and villages have been rare.

A notable incident of the year 1915 happened on December 5, when the Austrian light cruiser *Novara*, with some destroyers, raided the port of San Giovanni di Medua, which had become of extreme importance in connection with the succour of the hard-pressed Montenegrin and Serbian forces. In this action, although the Austrians made very extravagant claims, only two small steamers, as a matter of fact, were sunk, together with a few sailing craft. The chief interest in recording this raid is to lay emphasis upon the fact that the next phase of Italian naval operations had already begun—namely, that of making possible the tragic retreat into safety of the famished refugees and exhausted soldiers of the Serbian and Montenegrin armies who were

now beginning to straggle down in increasing numbers to the Albanian coast-line. It was largely for this purpose that the port of Medua, together with that of Durazzo, was being used, and it had meanwhile become necessary to occupy and greatly enlarge the former Austrian harbour of Valona, guarding the eastern entrance to the Straits of Otranto. With great secrecy, therefore, an Italian expeditionary force had been safely transferred to this port, and as the result of an enormous amount of labour a rapid transformation had been effected. Needless to say, it had been wholly impossible, in spite of all precautions, to conceal this great movement in its entirety from the enemy, but throughout the operation only two vessels were lost—a very remarkable record; one of these was a chartered merchant-vessel, the *Re Umberto*, and the other a destroyer, the *Intrepido*, one of the latest vessels, built by Messrs. Pattison at Naples, and launched in 1913. Even so, neither of these ships was lost as the result of direct enemy action; both of them had the ill-fortune to strike floating mines. Of the immense amount of material transported from Italy during these last weeks of 1915 and the strenuous and capable work of her engineers, we shall speak later on, but, before passing on, one other raid may be mentioned as typifying the dangers which threatened every transport, and the courage and skill with which these were either forestalled or defeated.

On December 28 an Austrian destroyer flotilla set sail from Cattaro to bombard Durazzo, where it shelled the land batteries and sank in the harbour a steamer and a sailing vessel. A combined force, however, of French, British, and Italian light vessels put to sea to cut them off from their base, and succeeded in heavily engaging them. The Austrian destroyer *Triglav* was sunk, and a sister ship forced into a mine-field and blown up—a tribute not only to the effectiveness of the naval precautions taken, but to the close unity between the three fleets holding command of the Mediterranean.

## CHAPTER VI

## A WORK OF MERCY

## I

SUCH is the unadorned record, in chronological order, of the first few months of Italy's naval intervention in the world war. If it consists largely of what may be termed minor actions in the various fields of activity, this must not be allowed to mask those larger results of which they were but the expression. Bottled up in Pola and Cattaro, Austria's main fleet remained, as a war factor, practically nugatory. Lurking behind the islands fringing its coastline, its flotillas of submarines and torpedo-boats had been unable to challenge in any serious sense the complete mastery by the *Entente* navies of the whole of the Adriatic. If as a consequence of this the work of the Italian Navy was unspectacular, that is in itself, perhaps, the best tribute to the efficiency with which it had approached the initial tasks allotted to it. With everything against it in the way of natural advantages, it had secured the safety of these narrow seas. How vital this was to the success of the cause for which the Allies had been fighting cannot be more tersely stated than in the remarks made by Mr. Balfour, then First Lord of the Admiralty, in the House of Commons, in answer to a question put to him on February 23, 1916. "The best indication," he then said, "of the work performed by the Allied fleets in the Mediterranean is the successful transport of large military forces to Salonica, Valona, and Egypt, the successful evacuation of the Allied expedition from the Dardanelles, and, last but not least, the transportation of the Serbian Army from Albania, a result chiefly due to the energy and ability displayed by the Italian fleet."

That was perhaps the greatest single feat that the Italian Navy has accomplished, since it was not less than the salvation of a nation, albeit the desperately reduced and harassed fragment of one. Nor is it conceivable that the restored Serbia will ever forget the debt that she owes to Italy. Nothing more epical in the war has been set on record than the amazing rescue of that stricken remnant, with its heroic King sharing every danger with his retreating people. And it was more than this: it was the preservation, in timely and pitying hands, of the continuity of a whole race. "One of your Kings," declared old King Peter to the assembled officers of the Italian destroyer *Abba*, "had to learn the road to exile, and only a few years later came Italy's hour of freedom." So shall the free and restored Serbia have graven upon its record the help of Italy's seamen in her blackest hour.

Before considering in detail, however, this magnificent episode, it is necessary to bear in mind the chain of events that had led up to it, those tragic emergencies, so astonishingly overcome, with which Italy was confronted at the outset of her noble work. Returning for a moment, therefore, to July 17, 1915, a fateful day for the Balkan nations, we find the general position in the East none too hopeful for the Allied cause. Thrown back from the Donajetz to the San, thrown back from the San to the confines of Galicia, the Russian forces on the east were yielding stubbornly, mile by mile, to the victorious Austro-German advance, only by the most desperate heroism and skilful leadership avoiding the complete crushing of their hard-pressed ranks. We see Warsaw being evacuated, and the whole of Russian Poland on the verge of being finally yielded to its present implacable occupiers. And we see the French and British also facing heroic failure on the corpse-strewn peninsula of Gallipoli, where they had already sustained between them more than 50,000 casualties.

Such was the position, of which full advantage was being

taken by the Teuton diplomats, when, on this day, so charged with fate for the still unconquered but exhausted Serbians, a secret agreement was made by the Central Powers, ensuring upon terms the adhesion of Bulgaria. By this Treaty, to which Berlin, Vienna, Constantinople, and Sofia were all signatories, Bulgaria was to receive, not only Serbia, Macedonia, and Salonica, but also the Greek territory of Epirus to the south of Albania—her blood-money for the slaughter of Serbia, whose extermination had already been resolved upon.

Two months later, on September 19, having completed all his arrangements with characteristic thoroughness, General von Mackensen moved against Serbia in enormous force and began the bombardment of Belgrade. On September 23 Bulgaria mobilized, just as Russia in the north had evacuated her great Vilna salient, and as the first detachment of British and French troops were being shipped from the Gallipoli Peninsula for the occupation of Salonica, which was now seen to be inevitably necessary for the Allied cause in the Balkan Peninsula. These troops began to land on October 3, about a week before the fall of Belgrade; and two days after this, on October 4, Bulgaria also formally declared war on Serbia.

The position of the Serbians was now desperate indeed. Inferior in numbers and equipment, they had already successfully resisted three invasions, and this, it may be recalled, after the two exhausting Balkan campaigns which had preceded the present European War by so short a time. Nevertheless, reduced as the Serbian Army had been to not much more than 200,000 effectives, it was still more than possible that this small force might once again have stemmed von Mackensen's thrust from the north. But to the armies of von Mackensen, there were now added at least a quarter of a million fresh troops threatening their right flank, and before such odds it was already clear that the fight could have but one issue. Betrayed by Greece, under

the régime of King Constantine, against the vehement protests of M. Venezelos and the loyal Greek majority, who were willing and anxious to abide by the spirit of the Treaty in which Greece had promised to assist her neighbour Serbia in the event of an invasion of her territory, her only hope lay in the success of a possible counter-move from Salonica. But here, alas! the British and French troops, only 13,000 in number were not only faced with insuperable difficulties as regarded terrain, but, as it was almost immediately perceived, were themselves threatened with possibly a disastrous move on the part of the traitorous element in Greece. The Allies were thus unable to render Serbia any direct or appreciable help.

On October 25 Uskub fell to the Bulgars. That disaster practically sealed Serbia's doom. All the routes of retreat to the south, to Prilep and Monastir, were now threatened or actually commanded by the enemy. Nish, the ancient capital, was besieged. Every route and pathway leading towards the Albanian mountains and the coast of the Adriatic had become the *Via Dolorosa* of thousands of distracted refugees, while at the same time the Austro-German forces from the north were advancing in overwhelming strength. On October 26 the Austrians and Bulgarians, after the capture of Orsova by the former, joined hands, and within a few days the heroic little armies that were resisting with all their puny might were divided—the northern wing fighting its way back towards the Montenegrin and Albanian borders, and the southern desperately endeavouring to join hands with the Allied forces at Salonica. On November 8 came the fall of Nish. After a most gallant action had been fought at the passes of Katchanik and Babuna in the north and south respectively—rearguard actions worthy to be ranked with any recorded in history—nothing remained of Serbia to defend, and little of one of the most intrepid armies that the world has ever known but the hungry, fever-stricken, and war-



worn, but undaunted columns that were retreating through the inhospitable Albanian mountains.

Of these columns the two chief were a southern detachment, including the heroic Uskub garrison, which was making its way down the river-bed of the Skumbi, through Elbasan, towards Durazzo, and a northern detachment, including the defenders of Belgrade, which was retreating through the mountains of Montenegro towards Scutari and the little port of San Giovanni di Medua. Fortunately, the German armies, satisfied with what they had already accomplished—leaving the Serbians, as they might have said, nothing but their eyes to weep with—did not heavily press this retreat; and the Bulgarians, though they made strenuous efforts, were unable, owing to the stubbornness of the Serbian rearguards and the inhospitable nature of the mountains, to do very much more than harass the exiled Serbians. Fortunately, also, Essad Pasha, at that time perhaps the most powerful figure in Albania, had by now definitely declared himself in alliance with the *Entente* Powers, and was doing his best, with all the means at his disposal, to assist the retreat, whose horrors can scarcely have been surpassed in all the annals of war.

For, apart from the armies themselves, tottering and in rags, were scores of Serbian families, including women, with infants in arms, old men, little children, struggling on foot over these bleak mountains, already deep in snow, down precipitous stream-beds, and across foaming torrents. Many of these people were already so weak with hunger or disease that they fell beside the way, often to die; others were cut off and massacred by roving bands of Albanian bandits; others, again, were forced to part with every little treasure that they had for a morsel of food at the same insatiable and avaricious hands. King Peter himself, racked with rheumatism, distracted with grief, and almost blind, made his way on horseback in disguise over the same harsh mountain tracks. With a little group of half a dozen

soldiers and officers, he reached the coast at last, more dead than alive, but unconquered and unconquerable in spirit, to find at length the friends who were to be his rescuers and those of the last of his broken people.

## II

This, then, was the situation which the Italian Navy was called upon to face in the dark days of December, 1915—the feeding, the clothing, the disinfecting, and the healing of the survivors of an heroic nation, staggering down blindly from the desolate and frozen mountains to a coast wellnigh as bleak, but for friendly Italian hands. It was a task which might well have baffled any navy less adequate, however pitiful and charged with good intent. For consider the position. The whole of these people, nearly 200,000 all told, had to be conveyed and convoyed across a strip of water which was not more than 40 miles broad, but every yard of which was open to attack, not only by destroyers and submarines, but by floating mines, with which the Austrians were daily and nightly sowing the coast, and with both starting and landing points open to aerial bombardment from hostile aircraft. Behind them pressed victorious armies, so that their places of embarkation had to be garrisoned and fortified for their reception. The food and hospital necessities, provided so willingly by England and France, as well as by Italy herself, had to be transported across the water, to say nothing of the munitions and supplies for the Italian troops; and the whole of the refugees, military and civilian, had finally to be transhipped to Italy or Corfu for recuperation. Moreover, none of the three available harbours at Medua, Durazzo, and Valona had facilities for such a task; they had to be improvised almost at a moment's notice. Marshes and rivers had to be bridged; Medua and Durazzo were available only for the smallest vessels.

Such was the problem. It was obvious at the outset that its keystone lay at Valona, which was accordingly occupied by an Italian expeditionary force early in December, 1915. An enormous amount of work had already been accomplished, in fever haste, but with admirable judgment, by the pioneers, naval and military, sanitary and engineering, who had been landed in advance. While an almost equivalent amount of work was simultaneously necessary at Brindisi, Valona was transformed from an unprotected, unjettied harbour with one rickety bridge and an environment of marshes into a naval base and concentration camp of the first order. Mine-fields were laid and anti-submarine and anti-torpedo nets arranged. Shore batteries were constructed at every appropriate spot and connected up with submarine telephones and equipped with wireless and heliograph apparatus. The surrounding mountains were rapidly surveyed, and a great barrier of military defence skilfully created. Storehouses and magazines arose as if by magic. Anti-aircraft guns and aerodromes sprang into place like mushrooms. And all this in the midst of a local population many of whom were passively, and others more actively, hostile; many of whom were disease-carriers; many of whom were sullen and suspicious, having been bestialized by years of Turkish oppression; and not a few of whom were open to all forms of bribery and corruption, and were even in the pay of the enemy as spies.

Besides all this work in Valona itself, the foundations of a huge reception camp were being laid a little to the north of it on a ridge of sand, to be soon known as the Arta Camp, and destined to reach enormous proportions when the magnitude of the calls upon it came to be realized. Here stout and weather-proof huts were built and hospitals provided, together with every sanitary device that modern science deemed necessary and that the occasion demanded.

Such was Valona, then, when it welcomed the Italian

Expeditionary Force in the early days of December, afterwards becoming the great base of all this work of mercy—its pivot, as it were, on the Albanian side. But it had already become clear that it would be necessary to push troops and supplies a good deal farther north. Accordingly, while the work of preparation at Valona itself was still in full swing, troops were pushed up into the surrounding country, while a strong detachment occupied the hills round the harbours of Durazzo and Medua. At these points, also, great difficulties occurred in the matter of navigation and defence. The water was shallow, prohibiting the use of any but vessels of the smallest size. The position of the ports was such as to leave their roadsteads exposed to most of the violent winds of the Adriatic. There was a complete dearth not only of landing facilities, but also of effective local labour. Moreover, their nearness to the strong Austrian naval base at Cattaro rendered the transports and convoys particularly open to submarine, destroyer, and aircraft attack.

The offer of even the highest wages could not persuade the Albanian inhabitants to give any assistance in view of possible Austrian bombs, and the work of disembarkation and embarkation fell, consequently, almost entirely on the Italian crews themselves. Upon them alone rested the difficult task of setting up gangways and managing the flat-bottomed boats, while the shore arrangements for storing and portage had to be reorganized almost daily. These were the conditions that prevailed during the whole of the late summer and autumn months, when food and munitions were being landed for the Montenegrins and Serbians, before the final debacle had begun. The losses by theft and exposure to the weather, owing to the apathy of the coastal population, had resulted in the wastage of a considerable amount of these valuable stores, with the consequent aggravation of the already overwhelming hardships suffered by the people whom they were intended to succour.

At the little port of San Giovanni di Medua alone, where the prevailing high seas often rendered even the approach to the shore itself a perilous undertaking, not less than 7,000 tons of food and material had been landed by the small vessels which only could be used.

### III

With the shores secure, in so far as almost superhuman endeavour could make them, there begun, early in December, to trickle down from the Montenegrin and Albanian heights the forerunners of such a flood of famished, dirt-engrained, and pestilence-stricken humanity as can seldom indeed have been seen in the Christian era. At first in twos and threes, but soon in scores and hundreds and thousands, the blind leading the blind, the dying sometimes carrying little dead children in their arms, most of them suffering besides the pangs of physical distress, the mental and spiritual anguish of bereavement, they poured down upon this winter coast. Living skeletons, as the result of sleeplessness and starvation, many of them were already the victims of typhus, dysentery, or cholera. All had the same dazed and glassy look in their sunken eyes. From the lips of not a few hung straws of the bitter and sometimes poisonous herbs and grasses that they had plucked and chewed in a vain attempt to stifle the pangs of hunger. Coughing and vomiting, with blackened skins and swollen feet, many of them, on reaching the shore, fell in their tracks and lay there as if dead—not only themselves suffering from one or other of the diseases rampant amongst them, but a possible source of an infection that might well have decimated the armies of their relievers. Filthy and inert, swarming with vermin, often enough with fetid wounds gallantly won, they sat or lay there, stupefied by all that they had undergone, not better to be described, perhaps, than by that expressive French adjective *abrutis*—the

temporary inmates of what had suddenly become a vast charnel-house on the Albanian shore of the Adriatic.

Rich and poor were all alike in the hopeless misery into which they had sunk. Little household treasures—the last relics of the Serbian homesteads that they had loved—lay unregarded beside them in strange and bizarre confusion. Earthenware jugs, old sacks of clothing, metal spoons tied up with string, the fashionable fur coat of some wealthy lady, lay side by side in a tragic and grotesque disorder. Nursing mothers bent stony eyes over their skeleton babies, clasping them to their dried breasts. Old men, fathers of families, who had seen their sons fall in war, and whose daughters had been torn from them, either by Teuton or Bulgarian invaders, by Albanian brigands, or by the tribulations that had proved too strong for them in those terrible passes of the Black Mountains, sat desolate on the shore amid the last wreckage of their lives. Soldiers, who a few months previously, with great and splendid courage, had been hurling back the Austrian invaders, now lay listless with hollow cheeks and shut or staring eyes, as if life had now no deeper hell for them to go through than this. Others, too weak to scream, lay twisted and contorted with the terrible cramps of dysentery or cholera; and others, shivering and burning with fever, with purulent and stinking wounds, lay huddled in the depths of their wretchedness on these bleak sands and shingles. And over all brooded the impalpable and fetid stench of running sores and decayed and unwashed flesh.

It was such a scene as no tragedian from Homer, Æschylus, and Euripides, to Dante, Shakespeare, or Milton, had ever succeeded in painting even with the sombre or lurid colours of the imagination of genius, and one that the shores of the Mediterranean, strewn as they had been from time immemorial by the disasters of armies and the wreckage of nations, could scarcely have looked upon since time began. Fortunate for them and for the world that there

should have been ready to receive them so brave and skilled and sympathetic an army and navy—surely the most needed and the most merciful, as well as one of the most skilful, that had ever left the coast of Italy.

Day and night, caring nothing for the risks of infection, striving with all the weapons of modern research to prevent this plague spot from infecting half a continent, the naval and military doctors, with their sailor and soldier orderlies, fed, tended, bandaged, and with hands soft as women's nursed these poor spectres of fellow-creatures. It was in the midst of such scenes of mingled human suffering and more than human sympathy that the old King of these poor people himself came. No more pathetic figure of a monarch can ever have moved amongst his subjects, himself tortured with cruel pain and graven with the lines of fatigue, privation, and grief. Throughout it all, however, realizing that in his person fate had made him symbolic of his race, he never gave way to despair. Refusing royal honours, he and his few faithful followers at last boarded the Italian destroyer *Abba*, which was to bear them to safety. Overwhelmed as the King was with all that had befallen him and his country, he insisted on receiving and greeting all the officers of the *Abba*, thanking them with generous words for all that they had done and the perils that they had undergone upon their mission of mercy. Reminding them of Garibaldi, their own national hero—to many of them already, perhaps, almost a legendary figure—he told them that he had himself twice met that famous soldier. Recalling to them the dark pages of their own national history, with its eventual triumph, he suggested to them that possibly Serbia might be the Piedmont of all the Serbians, and even then in this its blackest hour, the forerunner of an undreamed-of and triumphant unity.

## IV

And now let us leave for a moment this passion of a race being enacted at Medua, Durazzo, Valona—on the shores between them, and on the mountain roads leading down to these—and turn for a moment to that other little struggling State, Montenegro. For by this time, with the Serbian armies fighting their rearguard actions in the Albanian passes, but with all serious resistance, as far as Serbia was concerned, now finally at an end, the Austrian armies were marching in full strength, both from the north and east, upon Montenegro. At the same time, from their base at Cattaro, the Austrians had begun the heavy bombardment of Mount Lovtchen, without which Cetinje, the Montenegrin capital, could not be held. This little army had been decimated by hunger and disease, and was hopelessly outgunned and out-munitioned. All resistance, indeed, was but a forlorn hope. On January 10, as the result of a concentrated attack, Mount Lovtchen fell. Other Austrian armies were pouring into Montenegro down the river-beds of the Tara and Lin, the confluence of the Drina, and on January 13 the capital itself was in the hands of the enemy.

The Montenegrin Army, or what was left of it, fought its way back to Podgoritzza and Scutari, to which place the Serbian Government, as well as the King and Queen of Montenegro, had already retreated. Here, with the Austrian armies pressing hotly towards the coast, and surrounded by spies and conspiracies and enemy agents of all sorts, it was soon clear that no further stand could long be made, and that Montenegro itself, in the completeness of its cruel invasion, was to stand side by side with Serbia. On January 19, 1916, the Queen of Montenegro boarded the Italian ship *Animoso* at the mouth of the Bojana, scarcely ten miles from the Austrian frontier, and within full reach of Cattaro. Two days later the *Abba* and *Ardito* entered Medua Harbour to take on board the King of Montenegro



and his immediate entourage, including his son, Prince Peter, and various Ministers of State; while on the same day, in the destroyer *Schiaffino*, Admiral Troubridge, who was then the Chief of the British Mission in Montenegro, and General Mondesir, who was in charge of the reorganization of the Serbian Army, were also safely embarked. M. Paschich, the Serbian Premier, with various other members of the Serbian Government and the diplomatic representatives there, had three or four days before been taken on board the auxiliary cruiser *Città di Bari*, and escorted to Brindisi, where the King of Montenegro was afterwards received with the utmost hospitality on his way to France.

Ten days later Scutari also fell before the Austrian armies. And soon afterwards the little port of San Giovanni di Medua followed suit, and there began that movement towards Durazzo itself, still thronged with thousands of refugees, the evacuation of which by the Italian Navy, under such circumstances and amidst such horrors, surely remains one of the most brilliant feats of arms of the whole war. For many weeks, indeed, the process of feeding, medical relief, and systematic embarkation had been going on, subject to hourly perils, courageously disregarded by the medical, sanitary, and nursing services, whose fine efforts to drag back to life and health these pathetic victims had been magnificently seconded by their brethren under arms. Nor were they unrewarded. For, given a minimum of physical ease and nourishment to start the work of restoration, and the invariable courage of these warrior races soon began to reassert itself. With hope returning, they began to realize that, racked and tortured as they had been, they were still free men with a country to be regained—a country whose immortal spirit, breathing in each one of them, was now to prove itself inextinguishable. Of such as made the most rapid progress, therefore, it soon became possible again to form columns for the further journey by foot from Durazzo along the road to Valona—sixty miles in

length and one of the finest achievements of Italian engineering skill which the war had yet produced. Here, at various stages, rest stations had been established; and for many days, throughout its length, bodies of these reviving soldiers, together with the stronger of the civilians, might be seen making their way towards the city of refuge. The women and children, wounded and invalids, and men who were still too exhausted by their recent terrible ordeal to undertake the journey by foot, were transhipped from Durazzo to Valona, whence larger steamers conveyed them to Italy, to the island of Corfu, which had been previously occupied and prepared for their reception, and to Biserta, in Tunis, where the French Government had, with splendid generosity, also made preparations to receive them.

Throughout January and February, 1916, this vast movement went on continuously, while others of the Serbians arrived directly at Valona, including a large contingent that had made a stand at Elbasan against the advancing Bulgarians, whom they had fought to their last cartridges, before yielding this town up to them. These, with other military refugees, were accommodated at Arta preparatory to their final shipment overseas in Italian vessels for a period of recuperation before they joined the restored Serbian Army at Salonica.

Meanwhile at Durazzo the position, owing to Austrian pressure, was becoming more and more critical. Though the port, no doubt, might have been held indefinitely, this would have entailed a very much larger military effort than its retention would have justified, especially in view of its poor equipment as a harbour and the exposed position of its roadstead. It was decided, therefore, to evacuate the town on February 26, and the responsibilities thus placed on the officers in command can best be gathered by considering the situation on February 24, only two days before.

There were no less than 6,000 persons, exclusive of another 1,300 sick and wounded, still waiting to be embarked. The

Italian garrison, now reduced from 5,000 to 2,000 men, was slowly evacuating the surrounding country, retiring in perfect order and according to plan, making well-arranged counter-attacks when necessary, and inflicting all the time considerable losses on the enemy's superior forces, as well as taking numerous prisoners. The bigger guns, which had been mounted in secluded positions amongst the adjacent hills, had already been brought down to the harbour for transshipment, whilst strong counter-battery work against the approaching Austrian artillery, which was now dropping shells on to the harbour quay, was systematically carried out from the sea, a flotilla of destroyers having been detailed to shell such positions as Sasso Blanco, Rastbul, and Mali Roht. This Austrian bombardment, indeed, might have proved much more serious had not the Austrian commanders feared the intervention of an Italian naval squadron on a far bigger scale—an unsolicited testimonial to the efficiency and power of Italy's naval guns. It was under these conditions, also, that Essad Pasha, whose assistance had been so valuable to the retiring armies, was embarked in the Italian destroyer *Impetuoso*, with members of the Italian Legation, 300 of his Albanian followers having been taken on board the *Città di Bari*.

The next morning, February 25, the cruiser *Libia*, also familiar to us, entered the harbour and joined in the bombardment of the encroaching Austrian lines, succeeding in finally silencing the enemy batteries at Sasso Blanco. The heavily laden transports having been safely got to sea, the commander landed a party of marines, at the same time shelling the Austrian baggage column between Sasso Blanco and Rastbul. Enemy shells were now falling into the hapless town in ever-increasing numbers; but later in the day the cruiser *Puglia*, together with the auxiliary cruisers *Città di Catania* and *Città di Siracusa*, arrived in the roads. The *Puglia* was the third-class cruiser which had already taken part in the notable little

action of Kunfida, in the Red Sea, during the Tripoli campaign. Completed in 1901, she was of 2,500 tons displacement, with an armament of four 5·9-inch, six 4·7-inch, one 2·9-inch, eight 2·2-inch, and eight 1·4-inch guns, with a maximum speed of 20 knots. The *Città di Siracusa* and the *Città di Catania* were subsidized cruisers belonging to the State Railways, with a speed of  $19\frac{3}{4}$  knots and 23 knots respectively, and an armament of two 2·4-inch quick-firing and four 1·4-inch guns. These vessels with well-directed fire silenced the Austrian batteries, the only casualties being sustained by the *Città di Siracusa*, a chance Austrian shot killing one and wounding eighty-six of the crew.

All through the day this bombardment and counter-bombardment continued at intervals, the transports being nevertheless despatched with the utmost regularity; at night the cruiser's searchlights swept the enemy's positions, their guns continuing to assist the artillery still in position ashore. So dawned February 26, the critical day fixed for the final evacuation of the beleaguered port, and to add to the already enormous difficulties of this delicate task there came an untoward change in the weather, the sea having risen during the night and breaking in giant rollers upon the quay.

For these last operations it had been arranged that a convoy of twelve steamers and a hospital ship, well protected by groups of destroyers, should enter the harbour of Durazzo. Besides these, two battleships and another destroyer flotilla were to bring up the rear, thus holding the sea in case these movements, impossible to conceal from the enemy, should be seriously challenged by the Austrian Navy. It was imperatively necessary that all the embarkations should be completed by nightfall. Accordingly, under a heavy Austrian fire concentrated on the only available gangway, the sick and wounded were first got on board the hospital ship. Over six hundred Italian sailors were carried through

the hail of Austrian shells, other enemy batteries simultaneously bombarding the transports and destroyer squadrons in the bay. Upon the Italian rearguard, surrounding the town, now fell the perilous task of retiring in good order and according to time-table, in front of the ever-increasing pressure of the investing armies. It is needless to say that this was carried out with a coolness and determination and spirit of self-effacement beyond praise. Nor could anything less than this have prevented a disaster. With the waiting convoys only by the most skilful seamanship avoiding the continual stream of falling shells, and yet necessarily unable to shift their positions except within the narrowest limits; with the surrounding heights held by the enemy, giving him a full view of all that was passing; and with the quays still crowded with the Serbian soldiery, the least error of judgment or lapse of courage might have involved the whole operation in irredeemable catastrophe. The nerve-racking anxiety of those in command may well be imagined.

Briskly as the destroyers were playing their part in enfilading the enemy's flank from the sea, the Austrians, with such a prize before them, were trebling their efforts and searching with their shell-fire every foot of the harbour. It was from the commanding position of Monte Vaes that the most serious and menacing fire came, and it was chiefly to obtain some security against this bombardment that one of the most daring little episodes of the whole day was directed. Assembled from launch-parties, and under the full fire of the enemy, a party of one hundred sailors landed and crept on all fours along the beach towards a great dump of flour-sacks numbering several thousands. With these they built a breastwork, constructing two effective trenches to enable the retiring troops to reach the gangway. Having completed the work with speed and skill, they once more returned to their respective ships. Meanwhile the rafts had been rigged. This was the position at noon, when there

once more steamed into the bay the well-trying and welcome grey forms of the cruisers *Libia* and *Puglia*.

These ships, notwithstanding the rough seas now running, quickly entered the bay and came into action in spite of the hot gun-fire which their arrival had drawn upon them from the Austrian batteries. Seeing that they had thus attracted attention upon themselves, they were careful to remain at a considerable distance from the convoys, and with skill and judgment they chose the exact targets that they wished to assault with their secondary armament. They then brought to bear upon the enemy lines the weight of their whole gun-fire, searching the hills surrounding the town with dramatic effect. For two hours without ceasing they continued this bombardment with full fury, silencing all the Austrian batteries except a few guns beyond Monte Vaes, which continued to drop shells, now and then, in the region of the gangways and rafts. The effect of this invaluable assistance was immediately felt. The hostile pressure upon the troops retreating in a diminishing cordon round the town was immediately relaxed, the brave defenders, indeed, organizing a counter-attack with the object of securing their retreat to the sea and the safe recovery of their own wounded.

Meanwhile the destroyers upon the enemy's flank were still continuing to fire with such effect, that a further retirement of the investing forces into the shelter offered by Monte Vaes became imperative, thus further contributing to secure the successful embarkation of the Italian troops. All this time, too, under cover of the flour-sack trenches already mentioned, stretchers containing wounded men and Albanian refugees, with their women and children, were continuing to pour from the town and along the gangway to the waiting rafts and embarkation boats. These amounted in all to no less than 10,000 individuals. Yet by eight o'clock at night the whole of them were safe on board the waiting steamers—General Ferrero being the last to embark

in the *Abba*, that trusty little destroyer, already consecrated by the presence of so many heroes.

The main part of this great and difficult operation was now over. As regards men, women, and children, soldiers and refugees, Durazzo was successfully evacuated. But it was manifestly impossible to remove as well many of the horses and mules, together with the stores with which a large number of the warehouses were still full. These, therefore, remained to be destroyed before the Austrian invaders advanced. In order to achieve this purpose, while the cruiser *Libia* and the destroyer flotillas continued to keep up their barrage of fire upon the hills, the *Puglia* opened on the warehouses and the assembled horses, a very few shots sufficing to destroy the whole of these completely.

So night fell with great columns of flame-lit smoke rolling up from the hills, and with the warehouses, that in their time had served so useful and merciful a purpose, glowing like furnaces and casting their red reflections upon the lurid waters. Out in the bay the twelve steamers, crowded with the last of the refugees, together with the hospital ship full of wounded, were being assembled in the order of their sailing. Spreading fan-like beyond these, all along the coast, were cruisers and destroyers, belching flames, while the shore itself rocked with the thunderous explosions of the shells. Soon all anchors were heaved, and one by one into the darkness the transports and their escorts disappeared towards Valona, a fast destroyer leading the way and flashing signals from its masthead. And all the time the consuming town, like some giant volcano, tossed the sparks of its fiery wreckage into the night.

Such was the scene! It was a fitting conclusion to the unspeakable horrors of which this town and its surrounding shores had for so long been witnesses. Nor is it likely when this world-war shall in future centuries find its Homer that he will be able to set upon his pages the picture of a climax more devastating than this—the purging by fire of

Durazzo, into whose smoking ruins it was not until the following dawn that the Austrian armies were at last allowed to enter unmolested.

## V

This was the conclusion, then, of an episode of which every Italian may well be proud. For the ensuring of this triumph many factors had been necessary. Many of these played, of course, but an indirect, though none the less important, part in the drama, and many that may have seemed at the time to have but little bearing at all upon the result were, as a matter of fact, wholly essential to its success. Of these, mention must be made again of the armoured trains along the Adriatic coast, the ingenuity of whose invention had, to so large an extent, solved the difficult problem of Italy's coast defences, thereby releasing a number of those patrol vessels which had become so vital to the Serbian evacuation. Until the development of these armoured trains it was upon these vessels that the whole defence of the Western Adriatic shores had depended, and no words of praise can be too high for the untiring courage and tenacity of the officers and men responsible for them. Nor could the use of patrols be entirely given up even when the conveying of the Montenegrin and Serbian refugees placed so enormous a demand upon the services of every available destroyer and scout. The every-day and every-night movements that secured the integrity of the Otranto Straits and the prevention of contraband trade in neutral vessels destined for the Central Empires had to be continued. The continual search for and chase of submarines and the supervision and protection of the mine-drifters could never for a moment be abandoned. The importance of this little-advertised and desperately dangerous service cannot be overestimated, nor can omission be made of the invaluable work performed by the patrols in more direct contact with the convoys. Each of these, during the whole



of the critical months under review, had its particular sphere, its own area to scout, its allotted portion of sea to sentinel. Policing the whole of the Lower Adriatic, nosing their way with dauntless courage into all sorts of obscure lurking-places, never taking their eyes off the water, wherefrom a periscope might suddenly emerge, beating up and down the coast and across the narrow seas, in all conditions of wind and weather, these little vessels were indeed the foundation upon which the whole operation depended. Nineteen times the Austrian submarines attacked the Serbian convoys, and nineteen times they failed. Twice on February 15 and on February 23, 1916, the Austro-German submarine U C 12 laid a dozen mines in the Durazzo roadstead when the transport operation was at its height, and every one of these twenty-four mines was gathered up and put out of harm's way without the loss of a single life.

Nor must the Staff work, so largely responsible for these splendid results, be forgotten. Everything had been studied in advance to the minutest detail. Continual alterations of course for each of the convoys had been planned, so as to baffle the enemy. The exact moment of sailing, the time to be occupied on the voyage, and the hour of arrival, had been so arranged as to bring the ships in and out of harbour under the most favourable conditions. The composition of each convoy had been a matter of the most careful thought, together with the strength of escort that could be allotted to each from the available resources. Each convoy was limited to four or five transports, with a flotilla of destroyers to shepherd it, and a powerful guard of torpedo-boats and motor vessels in immediate attendance, with cruisers and large destroyers in the offing in case they should be wanted. Up to January 27 there were also direct convoys between the port of Medua and Brindisi, as well as between Durazzo and Brindisi. Later on it became necessary to conduct most of the traffic from the Montenegrin and Albanian ports to the base at Valona, but in every case

the protection was as absolute as it could be made. Occasional casualties could not be avoided, and the only wonder is that there were so few. Among these may be mentioned the loss of the small ambulance ship *Marechiaro*. Filled with wounded, she struck a mine just outside Durazzo, and took fire, afterwards sinking. Though there were no less than 120 wounded Serbian soldiers lying in their beds at the time, the whole of them were saved both from fire and drowning, although a large number of the crew, including Commandant Cacace, were unhappily lost. Where all were heroic, the conduct of Surgeon-Captain Gnasso was conspicuously so. Although himself wounded, he succeeded, by his coolness and courage, in calming the natural panic with which the wounded soldiers were seized in face of the awful explosion and raging fire. Having done this, he succeeded in transshipping them all to a neighbouring drifter, refusing to have his own wounds dressed until the last wounded man had been put into safety.

Another most gallant episode was that of the little *Ionio*, when a large French steamer just ahead of her ran ashore on the Albanian coast during the removal of the Serbian Army. She instantly stopped her engines, lowered her boats, and, taking a tow-rope to the crowded steamer, presently succeeded in getting her afloat. While this was being done an Austrian submarine came in sight and attempted to torpedo the *Ionio*, no doubt hoping that the little vessel would thereby be forced to seek her own safety, abandoning the large French steamer to the mercy of the submarine. No idea, however, could have been more ill-founded. The *Ionio* continued at her task. A second torpedo was discharged at her, but again missed its object, and a moment or two later a couple of destroyers came to the rescue and drove the submarine away.

The action of December 29, in which the Austrian sortie from Cattaro was so completely frustrated, has already been referred to in the previous chapter, but on February 6

another attempt was made. Signalling from a position only eighteen miles west of Cape Laki, the British cruiser *Liverpool* warned the destroyer *Bronzetti* that an enemy aeroplane was in sight. No sooner, however, had the *Bronzetti* prepared its anti-aircraft guns than the aeroplane disappeared in the direction of Cattaro. In due course there appeared on the horizon in the same direction a tell-tale puff of smoke. The *Bronzetti* immediately gave chase at her full speed of over 30 knots, and began to over-haul the enemy. Without attempting to join action, the enemy vessel at once began to retreat, hugging the coast, and trying to find shelter under the batteries of Traste. The guns immediately opened fire upon the *Bronzetti*, but without succeeding in turning her from her course. To within three miles of Cattaro the gallant *Bronzetti* pursued, when it became clear that the enemy's advantage in distance was too great to be overcome. And it was not until then, with hostile shells bursting round her upon all sides, that the *Bronzetti* abandoned the chase and resumed her patrol.

Three other casualties were the sinking of the small steamers *Brindisi*, *Palatino*, and *Gallinara*, carrying food stores, while the loss of the little *Monsona* during the final evacuation of Durazzo has already been mentioned.

## VI

Lastly, let a few figures add, if they can, to the conception of the magnitude of this great achievement. Between December 12, 1915, and February 22, 1916, 11,651 refugees, invalids, and wounded persons were transported from the Albanian coast to Brindisi, Lipari, Marseilles, and Biserta, 130,841 Serbian soldiers were landed in Corfu, and 4,100 at Biserta. Employed in this great work were six large Italian liners, two French auxiliary cruisers, five Italian hospital ships, one French hospital ship, two small Italian ambulance vessels, and fifteen Italian, fifteen French, and

four small English steamers. Two hundred and sixteen voyages were successfully undertaken from San Giovanni di Medua, Durazzo, and Foci della Vojussa to Valona, eighty-seven from Valona to Corfu, and others to Brindisi, Lipari, Marseilles, and Biserta. Thirteen thousand and sixty-eight men and 10,153 horses belonging to the Serbian Cavalry were transported during March, 1916, from Valona to Corfu in three Italian, one French, and two English steamers in seventeen voyages. Twenty-two thousand nine hundred and twenty-eight Austrian prisoners were taken from Valona to Asinara between December 16, 1915, and February 12, 1916, in fifteen convoys by one English, two French, and eleven Italian steamers.

The condition of these prisoners was even more pitiful than that of the Serbian refugees, with whom they came to the coast; some died trying to swallow the first mouthful of bread offered to them by the Italians. On their way to Sardinia, more than 500 died of cholera on board a single transport. After having related all these horrors, it is gratifying to be able to state that those who reached Asinara (Sardinia), as a token of their gratitude to their rescuers, raised a monument of rough stones to Italy, on which one can read "*Viva l'Italia*," another proof, if it were needed, of the humane treatment of the prisoners who fell into Italian hands.

Food and hospital necessities for the Serbian refugees and soldiers encamped on the Albanian shores while waiting for transport were carried in twenty-four steamers, of which seventeen were Italian, making in all seventy-three voyages, and landing at San Giovanni di Medua, Durazzo, Valona, and Corfu, no less than 22,000 tons of food, fodder, and hospital stores and medicines.

Apart from all this it must be remembered that the whole of the creation and provisioning of the naval base at Valona, as well as the transport of the expeditionary army to Albania and its munitionment, had had to be undertaken

simultaneously with the carrying of food to and transport of the Serbians and Montenegrins from the same ports to the same destinations, and over the same routes. That this was also accomplished without confusion or delay to the evacuation of the hard-pressed refugees must surely constitute one of the finest transport achievements on record. In the successful guarding of all these vessels between December 12, 1915, and February 29, 1916, no less than 170 cruisers, destroyers, torpedo-boats, and motor craft were employed, the majority being under the Italian flag.

Finally, no account of this conspicuous masterpiece of organization would be complete without a tribute to its director, Vice-Admiral Emmanuel Cutinelli-Rendina, to whose unwearying supervision of every detail it was due in large measure.

## CHAPTER VII

### THE WORK OF THE SUBMARINE, ANTI-SUBMARINE AND NAVAL AIR SERVICES

#### I

IN common with the submarine branches of all the Allied navies, that of the Italian Navy has undergone enormous development since the outbreak of war, both as regards numbers, technical equipment, and personnel. But, as in the case of all the other *Entente* navies, its opportunities for actual offensive warfare have been extremely limited. With the opposing navies hidden in fortified harbours and the enemy mercantile marine driven from the waters, the *Entente* submarines have had to be content with very occasional chances of attack, largely confining themselves to recon-

naissance work, patrol and scouting duties, and the moral effect of their presence at sea upon their opponents.

Nor was Italy any more fortunate than her Allies in respect of her scope in submarine warfare. The record of this department of her naval activity remains in consequence one of strenuous and perilous hard work by day and night, with very little advertisement in the way of dramatic achievement, but none the less admirable on that account. The navigation, under what were still novel and unprecedented conditions, of perilous channels between hostile islands; the cautious nosing of frail vessels, singularly vulnerable when once discovered, into harbours bristling with well-placed batteries and often crowded with powerful battleships; the hourly menace of destruction by mines or motor craft or the quick-firing guns of rapid destroyers; the risk of capture by nets and other devices, developed and improved month by month—these were the daily ordeals, cheerfully and eagerly faced by these, the youngest sisters of the fleet. And in the Allied navies, at any rate, as in the parallel existence of the Air Service, they seem to have bred a new type of chivalry, common to the Allied seamen engaged in them, and all the stronger for the despicable abuse of it in Teuton submarine warfare that has horrified the world.

Very typical of this is the glimpse of life on board the *Prinz Regent Luitpold*, a North German Transatlantic steamer which fell into Italian hands and was stationed in the Adriatic, to serve as the headquarters—a sort of club—for the young submarine officers of the *Entente* navies, and where, in the common mess, and united by common perils and a splendid rivalry, they learned to know and respect one another as brothers, and to share their daily experiences. Here in the saloon, decorated in the florid, magniloquent fashion so engaging to the German eye, these young officers from day to day sat round the mess-table, each of them representative of all that was best in the various

countries from which they came. Reserved Englishmen, dashing and mercurial Frenchmen, ardent and eloquent Italians—with so many racial and national differences and methods of approaching each subject of discussion, but all initiated into the same service, where death is seldom more than inches distant, they sat, a changing company, day by day. Could that mess-table speak, it would have a history to tell such as Arthur's Round Table could not surpass; of incredible dangers, averted by a hair's breadth, and dismissed with a smile or taken for granted; of adventure after adventure, for the successful emergence from which, in other days, each of these young men would have received the accolade of knighthood, but which, as told here, became merely the modest task, the everyday topic of after-dinner gossip.

Too often, alas! the narrator of the evening was the absentee of the morrow. For two or three days there would be an empty place. Then the seats would be rearranged. This was but the fortune of war. Something must have happened on the other side, *laggiù* or *là bas*, and England, Italy, or France had lost for ever one of her noblest sons. So vanished Lieutenant Morillot of the French submarine *Monge*, and Lieutenants Jenkinson and Lane of a British submarine. So vanished Commanders Del Greco and Farinati, Lieutenants Boggio and Faldi, and many others, among whom were also Commander Giovannini and Lieutenant Cavalieri of the Italian submarines *N—* and *J—*.

The loss of this last submarine, which struck a mine while reconnoitring submerged in the dangerous waters near Trieste, was rendered remarkable by the extraordinary endurance and heroism of the solitary survivor, a seaman named Arturo Vietri. After the explosion which had killed many of the crew, wounded others, and scattered the remainder upon the waters with little chance of rescue, this seaman, who had charge of the torpedoes of the *J—*, found

himself near a struggling comrade. Himself an extremely powerful swimmer, Vietri assisted this man to free himself from his clothes, in order that he might have what little chance there was for life; and, having done so, he then swam to Lieutenant Cavalieri, who was making desperate efforts to remove his boots. Thanks to Vietri's assistance, he was able to do this, although, unfortunately, he did not succeed in saving his life. Having helped this officer, Vietri then swam back to the man whom he had assisted to undress, and who had cried out to him for further help. For a long time Vietri supported him, until at last it became apparent that he had already died in his arms. Since there was no more to be done for his unhappy comrade, Vietri then swam about to see if he could be of help to any others, but soon found himself apparently alone, with night falling and the distant shore of Grado gradually disappearing from view.

It was towards Grado, however, that, for a long time, he continued to swim, until it became evident that the current was setting away from the shore, and that it would be useless at present to waste his strength in attempting to overcome it. Unfortunately, the setting of the current was now carrying him towards Austrian territory, but it was his hope that he might keep himself afloat sufficiently long that, with the turn of the tide, he would once more be borne towards Grado. It was now quite dark, and for hour after hour he swam with no other guidance than the stars could afford him. Suddenly, however, a searchlight blazed out, and he realized that he was sufficiently near a point on the Austrian coast of the Adriatic to give him a very good chance of escape, should he make an effort to reach it by a last effort of powerful swimming. He could not, however, make up his mind even to buy his life at the price of becoming a prisoner in Austrian hands. Although he had been in the water now for several hours, he deliberately turned his back upon this chance of salvation, using the Austrian searchlights rather as beacons of warning than signals of help.



So he swam until at last the first light of the breaking day began to show in the east. He was now almost at the extremity of exhaustion, having been swimming for nearly twelve hours, when it suddenly became apparent to him that the low and sandy shore of Grado was slowly coming into view, and that he was indeed being carried, as he had previously calculated, towards what was now Italian territory. Presently, too, he sighted and swam towards a black object that proved to be a buoy off Grado. A few moments afterwards he heard the throbbing of a motor-boat, and called out for help. By good fortune he was heard, and rescued just in time, already almost delirious from the experiences that he had undergone after fourteen hours' continuous swimming — a record of endurance, heroism, and the finest loyalty, of which the Italian Navy may well be proud.

Perhaps to Vietri himself, as well as to many of those who have read the thrilling story of his experiences, there may well have been something symbolic in his landing at Grado — the first of Italy's redeemed towns on the shores of the Adriatic. We may perhaps be forgiven for a brief digression on this most ancient place, which has sustained many vicissitudes of fortune. Founded in the year 452, occupying a position at the end of the tongue of land that forms the northern entrance to the Gulf of Trieste, the first inhabitants of Grado were refugees from Aquileia, just before it fell to Attila the Hun. This city of Aquileia, which had become one of the most famous and wealthy in the whole Roman Empire, besides being one of the favourite residences of the Emperor Augustus, had been reduced almost to the last extremity by the enveloping legions of the invaders. It was accordingly decided by the surviving remnant of its defenders to endeavour, as a forlorn hope, to make their escape by night from the beleaguered city. According to legend, they stripped their streets, temples, and public places of the statues that adorned them, setting these up on

the fortifications so as to deceive the enemy into the belief that these were still being held in strength. They then, dressed in black, left the city by night in black boats, and made their way to the little island, where they founded the city called Aquileia Nova, which was the forerunner of the present Grado.

Situated at the end of the broad lagoon that reaches from the mouth of the Isonzo River to Porto Buso, and extends towards Marano and Caorle, touching hands with the chain of lagoons between Torcello, Murano, Venice, and Chioggia, Grado was at that time but an isolated village in a wilderness of waters and undrained marshes. Here, however, safe from their enemies, the refugees set immediately to work. Marshes were drained and channels deepened. The shores of the islands were strengthened and protected by means of wooden piles. Trees were cut down and houses built, and, in process of time, Grado itself became the capital city of a series of lagoon colonies—a network of islands and shallows with connecting channels. Slowly it grew in prosperity until it became in time one of the most important towns on the Northern Adriatic, and both the political and ecclesiastical head of all the surrounding neighbourhood. Among its famous shrines and churches, that of Maria delle Grazie still remains, while upon the surrounding islands there are other shrines scarcely less notable, amongst which may be mentioned the famous sanctuary of Barbana. The present cathedral of Grado, itself grown out of an old shrine built to commemorate St. Eufemia, is now dedicated to the martyrs Ermagora and Fortunato.

Till the seventh century, then, Grado was the metropolis of all this group of lagoons, but about this time it began to decline as the star of Venice rose in rivalry, and it never succeeded in regaining its one-time supremacy. Owing to its ancient history, its sanctuaries, and former greatness, it was always accorded a privileged position amongst the towns ruled by the Doges, being exempted from certain dues

and accorded various concessions. But in spite of this, as the centuries passed on, it continued to diminish, both in population and prosperity, gradually becoming more and more isolated, until it was little known except as a small centre of the fishing industry. Such was its position when, in 1797, by the Treaty of Campoformio, it passed into the hands of the Hapsburgs. In 1809 it was handed to France, and in 1815, at the Congress of Vienna, it was once more given to Austria—a town of little moment at the time from any but the historical standpoint, yet Italian to the very heart, and, indeed, a very epitome of Italy's story. The chief industry of Grado remained, as before, that of fishing, particularly the sardine, and the export of sand, in which its low shores are particularly rich. Within the last decade, however, it had been rapidly developed by a syndicate of Austrian capitalists as a seaside resort, and in 1913 the number of visitors, chiefly attracted by the sea-bathing, was estimated at no less than 18,000.

When war was declared on May 24, 1915, the population of Grado, numbering about 6,000, had already compulsorily yielded 1,200 unwilling conscripts to the Austrian Army, the remaining population consisting chiefly of women and children, old men and invalids. Nevertheless, amongst these the spirit imbuing all this coast of Italia Irredenta could not be suppressed, and on the afternoon of May 25, seeing an Italian destroyer in the bay, some women and children unfurled a concealed Italian flag on the Campanile. And on the next day, May 26, in support of some Bersaglieri who had already entered the town, a detachment of sailors landed, and Grado became Italian again in name as she had always been in heart—the first, it was hoped, of a score of other exiled cities on the Adriatic to be redeemed.

We have digressed from the story of the *J*— and the splendid gallantry of its survivor, so typical of the whole tradition in which the Italian submarine service is growing

up; and this was further exemplified in the story of the *N—*, which was lost off the island of Pelagosa. To the occupation of this island in the mid-Adriatic we have already referred in the previous chapter, and it was while on patrol duty there, taking alternate turns with a French submarine, that the *N—* was lost. Owing to the extreme clearness of the water in this region, and proximity to the Austrian shore, the dangers of submarine duty in the region of Pelagosa were always very great. On this occasion, travelling at night and in bad weather, the *N—* had succeeded, however, in safely reaching the island. She had on board some supplies for the small party of occupation, and, the sea being clear, these were being landed, when the periscope of a hostile submarine was sighted. Both the officers, with a portion of the crew, were on the shore at the time. It was at once obvious to them that the chances of getting on board and submerging in time to save the *N—* were almost non-existent, the alternative being, of course, practically certain death. They decided, however, to make a gallant, if forlorn, attempt both to save their submarine and, if possible, to engage the enemy. They got on board, and had already succeeded in partially submerging, when a torpedo struck the rocks a few yards forward of the *N—*. A moment or two later the *N—* herself received the full impact of a second torpedo, sinking in about 90 feet of water, the whole of the heroic crew being lost. Of the loss of the *M—* we have already written, and on August 3, 1916, there was a further casualty in the capture of the submarine — which stranded on a rock at the entrance of the Gulf of Quarnero while on patrol duty. This vessel, with three officers and eighteen men, was successfully brought into Pola by the Austrians.

Such is the toll that has been taken of what in all navies is perhaps the most vulnerable branch of their offensive activities. But the record, in spite of the lack of enemy targets, is by no means to be judged by any statement that

can be published during the war. Time after time information of the utmost value has been brought back by these under-water scouts. Reconnaissances, otherwise impossible, have been successfully carried out, and the moral effect of their unceasing initiative has been almost incalculable. Of this perhaps the most dramatic instance is that already referred to, in which the submarine *Foca*, alone and unaided, raised the bombardment of Ancona on May 24, 1915. The loss of the Austrian submarine U 12 on August 11, 1915, has also been mentioned. To this incident may be added the successful attack by an Italian submarine upon the Austrian gun-boat *Magnet*, which she torpedoed in the Northern Adriatic on August 2, 1916, the *Magnet* being a vessel of 500 tons, with a speed of 26 knots. It was believed that the *Magnet* was sunk, but it was afterwards reported from Vienna that she succeeded in reaching harbour in a damaged condition, having lost two men killed, four wounded, and seven missing.

## II

Needless to say, with her capital ships too valuable, as may be judged, to be risked in warfare, it was upon the submarine that the Austrian, like the German, Navy soon came chiefly to rely. The Italian fleet, accompanied by detachments of French and British naval warships, was continually patrolling the Adriatic and maintaining the mastery of its waters, and consequently the targets afforded to Austrian submarines were far more numerous than those sought in vain by the submarines of the *Entente* Powers. Losses were, of course, inevitable in these circumstances—the price that had to be paid for a domination of the sea that had not only driven the Austrian fleet to harbour and its mercantile marine off the waters, but had made possible all that transport work to which we have already referred, as well as the immense influx from abroad of munitions and supplies to Italy herself. To the torpedoing of the *Amalfi*

and *Garibaldi*, already mentioned, must be added the *Impetuoso*, a modern destroyer which was sunk by a submarine on July 10, 1916, in the Straits of Otranto, practically the whole of her crew, however, being happily saved. A further loss was that of the *Nembo* on October 16, 1916, while escorting the transport *Bormida* to Valona. This transport was sighted by U 16, a German submarine manned by an Austrian crew, which promptly launched a torpedo at her. The commander of the *Nembo* had already, however, spotted the periscope of the U 16, and with courage and presence of mind had so navigated the destroyer as to place her between the attacking submarine and the threatened troopship. Struck by the torpedo, the *Nembo* began almost immediately to sink, but her commander endeavoured to ram the submarine before the latter submerged. In this he was not successful, and quickly realizing his failure, he ordered depth charges to be dropped on the U boat. These brought the submarine to the surface severely damaged, and a few moments later both the destroyer and submarine disappeared together. The transport, carrying at the time nearly 3,000 people, succeeded in finishing her journey in safety. It is pleasant to record that not all of the gallant crew of the *Nembo* were lost, while some of the submarine's crew who had succeeded in getting hold of one of the life-boats from the destroyer were also afterwards picked up and made prisoners.

More remarkable still, perhaps, and especially in view of the very interesting evidence she presented of enemy tactics, was the sinking by a mine and subsequent salvaging of the Austrian submarine U C 12. This vessel had been employed in mine-laying—one of the new developments of the present war—and in February, 1916, when the evacuation of the Serbian and Montenegrin armies was at its most difficult stage, it was the U C 12 that had succeeded in sowing mines in the roadstead of Durazzo, two lines of these having been placed, which were fortunately discovered

and swept up without having done any damage to the extensive shipping. Leaving Durazzo to return to Cattaro, which was then her base, the U C 12 had then apparently undertaken the reconnaissance of an Italian harbour. Returning from this trip, she again arrived at Cattaro to rest and refit. It was from here that she started on her last voyage to lay a line of mines in the region of another Italian naval base, and in the very act of laying these she was destroyed. It was on March 16, 1916, that the U C 12 was thus trapped, about nine months after the first discovery of submarine mine-laying in the Adriatic. After examination by divers of the condition of the wrecked vessel and the position in which she had been sunk, the commandant of the port decided to try and salvage her, with most interesting and informing results.

Having successfully raised her, a task of no slight difficulty, the process of exploration began, a delicate and arduous proceeding, in view of the devastation caused by the explosion in the compartments that had been damaged. Here, amid twisted and broken plates, tangled tubes, and cracked engine parts, were found the remains of two bodies, which were carefully removed for future burial. The next object was to open up with oxidized flame-jets the other and undestroyed compartments; and here, in the control chamber in the forecastle, under the turret, and amongst the engines, several more dead bodies were discovered, fourteen in all, to receive subsequently decent and Christian burial. From the examination of these bodies, the clothing found upon them, and a number of letters and diaries, it was possible to piece together the whole story of the U C 12. Everything on board was found to be German. The sailors' clothing bore the distinctive mark of the German military stores at Kiel. The charts and records were written or printed upon German paper, and there were documents concerning the private accounts of various members of the crew addressed to the Kiel Savings Bank. The

only Austrian thing on board, indeed, was the flag, which had apparently been hoisted at Pola on June 28, 1915. Besides the Austrian flag, however, German, English, French, Italian, and Greek flags were also found on board; and it is interesting to note that, besides the loose money in Austrian kronen, some Greek drachma were also discovered.

Built at the Weser dockyard at Bremen by Siemens Schuckert, the U C 12 had gone into commission early in May, 1915. Its trial trip took place on the Weser, and it was taken by night through the Kaiser Wilhelm Canal and arrived at Kiel on May 17, where the first immersion trials were finished. On May 22 the first load of mines was taken on board. The Italian declaration of war having taken place on May 23, 1915, the U C 12 was then sent by rail, in three pieces, from Kiel to Pola, where she arrived on June 24. She was put together at the latter port, and on July 25 and August 15 she was employed in laying submarine mines. A further mission in which the U C 12 was employed was the conveyance of a cargo of rifles from Cattaro to Port Bardia, near Solum in Cyrenaica, intended for the rebels in Tripolitania. In February, 1916, the U C 12 was in the region of Durazzo, and, as has been said, was successful in laying mines in the roadstead. Her following history until the time that she was trapped has already been told, and the whole forms an interesting commentary on the methods, range of action, and objects of Germany's submarines, in that they fought Italy before the actual declaration of war.

Among the submarines sunk or captured by the Italians during the course of the campaign are included the U 3, U 4, U 6, U 12, and U 16. The U 7, U 8, and U 9 were also lost on their voyage from Pola to Constantinople. The submarine that torpedoed the *Garibaldi*, the submarine that sunk the *Renudin*, and the vessel which destroyed the *Nembo*, were all amongst the victims of the Italian defensive measures.



## III

No account of these measures against enemy tactics would be complete without references to the untiring day and night efforts of the mine-sweepers, inconspicuous and often too little thought of. As in British waters, these vessels were frequently trawlers in which local fishermen had changed their usual occupation, hazardous though it was, for one infinitely more fraught with peril. As in the case of British fishermen, so in that of the Italian fishermen, the lurking danger has never for a moment daunted them, and their record of cheerful and persistent service has been equal to that of any other class of Italy's defenders. It is gratifying also to recall that, as in other respects, so in this subordinate but vitally important service, British vessels have taken their share in the difficult work of keeping the Adriatic waterways clear from these instruments of danger. Side by side with the Italian fishermen, British fishermen have plied up and down the unfamiliar waters in complete comradeship with their Italian fellows. And the immortal action in which, unhappily, so many British drifters were sunk—that of May 5, 1917—is deserving here of a word or two.

It was while controlling the Straits of Otranto—that narrow entrance to the Adriatic Sea—that fourteen British drifters were destroyed by Austrian cruisers which issued from Cattaro. The *Admirable*, *Avondale*, *Coral Haven*, *Craignowan*, *Felicitas*, *Girl Gracie*, *Girl Rose*, *Helenore*, *Quarry Knowe*, *Selby*, *Serene*, *Taits*, *Transit*, and *Young Linnet*, were all unhappily sunk, seventy-two prisoners being taken and many casualties sustained. Each of these drifters, of which in all there were about forty-eight on duty, contained only ten men, and was armed with but one small gun. They were deployed in about eight divisions of six boats, each along a line running roughly between east and west, when they were suddenly attacked by three

powerful Austrian cruisers. These, on approaching the line of drifters, separated, one attacking the centre, and the other two the wings. The resistance put up by these little craft is one of the finest episodes of the war. One of the Austrian cruisers, approaching the *Gowan Lea*, ordered her crew to take to the boats, but the Skipper, J. Watt, R.N.R., who has since received the Victoria Cross, merely replied by ordering his engines to go full speed ahead, and called upon his crew for three cheers and a stout fight to the finish. Manning their little gun, they continued to fire it with extraordinary courage, until it was at last disabled by a well-directed shot from the cruiser. Nothing daunted by this, however, they continued, under a bombardment of the heaviest description, to repair the damage that had been done to their little vessel until the Austrian cruiser had passed out of range. Having patched up the *Gowan Lea* as best they could, her crew then went to the help of another drifter, the *Floandi*, where it was discovered that out of the crew of ten four had been killed and three wounded, her brave skipper, though himself seriously injured, having remained at his post throughout the engagement. Another splendid story of competence and courage was that of the crew of the *Admirable*, who on being given the choice of leaving the drifter had decided instead to fight to the last, only abandoning the vessel when the wheel-house had been shot away and the boiler exploded. Similarly, the *Girl Rose*, the *Coral Haven*, and the *Selby*, were only abandoned by their crews when they had been literally smashed to pieces beneath them. Such were the experiences also of the crews of the *Garrigill*, *Bon Espoir*, *Christmas Daisy*, and *British Crown*, who refused to leave their vessels, outgunned and outranged as they were, and exposed to the broadside fire of their formidable opponents.

So they fought, until the British cruisers *Dartmouth*, which had on board the Italian Rear-Admiral, and *Bristol* appeared on the scene, accompanied by French and Italian

light cruisers and destroyers. The enemy vessels were at once chased away, and were kept under a fierce fire until, near the entrance to Cattaro, some battleships came out in support, and the pursuing vessels, faced by overwhelming odds, had to give up the chase. Some Italian airmen, however, subsequently attacked the assembled Austrian vessels outside Cattaro, and, on returning, reported that one of the enemy cruisers had been set on fire and was being towed in a sinking condition into the harbour. There were no casualties in the pursuing cruisers and destroyers, except as the result of a torpedo explosion in H.M.S. *Dartmouth*, which was attacked by a submarine on her way back to port. As an instance of the close and cordial terms upon which the Italian and English navies have worked together throughout the war, we may quote the following messages which were despatched to Admiral Sir John (now Viscount) Jellicoe, then First Sea Lord of the Admiralty, by the Italian Minister of Marine and the Italian Commander-in-Chief. Admiral Corsi telegraphed as follows: "I convey to you my warmest admiration for the way in which H.M.S. *Dartmouth*, fighting against superior forces, nobly upheld the finest traditions of the British Navy." Admiral Thaon di Revel wired: "Please express Chief Naval Staff, Admiral Jellicoe, my hearty congratulations for brilliant action fought by H.M.S. *Dartmouth*, which, although torpedoed, was able to return safely to port."

#### IV

Turning now to the work of the Italian Naval Air Service, this has been marked throughout not only by its technical efficiency and rapid mechanical progress, but also by the daring and initiative of its pilots. At the beginning of the war Italian naval aviators were trained at Taranto and in Venice. Lieutenant Miraglia soon became generally known for his daring raids on Pola, flying a slow and old-

fashioned *Albatross*. In a few months new types of seaplanes were tested and brought into active service, among them the Z 3, of great efficiency for bombardments and reconnaissances, and the swift chaser M. Up to December, 1917, the aviators stationed in the upper Adriatic had flown more than a thousand times over Pola, without mentioning other places on the Austrian coast, as Trieste, Parenzo, etc. In the Lower Adriatic Cattaro and Durazzo were constantly raided, and subsequently British aviators joined there their Italian comrades. During the retreat of the Italian Army on the River Piave, the naval aviators had to help the army aviators, bombing bridges on the rivers, hangars, and the advancing enemy, just as they did against the retiring Austrians in June, 1918. In the first twenty days of November, 1917, the twelve aviators of a single squadron of seaplanes of the Upper Adriatic flew seventy-nine times on land and across the sea. In the war on submarines, Italian seaplanes have played a notable and increasingly fruitful part. In observing enemy concentrations and movements behind the myriad islands fringing the eastern coast of the Adriatic, their work has been in every sense invaluable. As early as May 27, 1915, four days after the declaration of war, the Italian naval airship M 2 bombed some destroyers at the mouth of the River Kerka, as has already been stated. On May 30 another Italian airship bombed the dockyard at Pola, including the railway and the petrol stores and the Austrian battleship *Erzherzog Franz Ferdinand*. Another successful raid was made early in the war by a number of Italian seaplanes upon a flotilla of Austrian destroyers in the Fasana Channel, between the island of Brioni and the mainland near Pola. Early in April, 1916, two Italian seaplanes, having bombed a signal station on the Austrian coast and put its defenders to flight, came down by the shore and landed their officers. These officers then destroyed the signal station, blew up a munition depot, set fire to some stores of coal, and destroyed the

landing-stage, after which they returned to their seaplanes and reached home in safety.

Of the brilliant work done by Italian aircraft, especially those of the world-famed Caproni make, this is not the time or place, perhaps, to speak, but many Austrian ports and much enemy shipping could give only too visible a testimonial to their daring and persistence. A seaplane raid on Pola on December 22, 1916, may, however, be mentioned, as well as a daring raid, about three weeks later, in which two Italian machines bombarded the aerodrome at Prosecco, the railway near Trieste, and the seaplane base in Trieste itself.

On January 12, 1917, Pola was again raided, French and Italian machines co-operating on this occasion. The resistance both from the land and in the air was on this occasion very fierce, but one Italian seaplane was successful in putting to flight three Austrian machines; and the whole squadron, together with the destroyers that had been acting in concert with them at sea, returned undamaged to their base.

These are but typical incidents of the sort of work that for the last three years the Italian Naval Air Service has been carrying on. A further instance occurred in April last. "Reconnoitring planes," the official communiqué stated, "having observed in the neighbourhood of Pola and Rovigno (Upper Adriatic) movements of enemy torpedo craft and small cargo ships, one of our bombing squadrons made an attack and succeeded in getting two direct hits on a torpedo-boat. Later a surprise attack was made on a warship protected by torpedo-boats and hydro-aeroplanes in the Fasana Channel. One hydro-aeroplane was brought down by our machines, and it fell into the sea in pieces. The warship and the torpedo craft were heavily bombed. One of our machines was damaged and forced to land in the sea, very near the enemy coast, but the other machines, in spite of the heavy sea, succeeded in descending and saving the pilot, whom they brought back safely to the

base." Thus in bald words the world was made acquainted with this stirring incident of this great war; it was hidden away in an inch or two of paper, among the resounding descriptions of the colossal world conflict, and yet every line of this little paragraph breathes the spirit that animates all the youth that is finding in the air to-day the inspiration that the Spanish Main supplied so many centuries ago. In the high and chivalrous comradeship that has been evolved by the peculiar perils of this still but half-explored world of activity, it is gratifying to find that the youth of Italy is second to none.

## CHAPTER VIII

### THE ITALIAN NAVY IN THE GREAT WAR: SECOND PHASE

THE description of the sort of work that has been undertaken so brilliantly and successfully, and with so little self-praise, by every branch of the Italian Navy is now almost complete, but a few later incidents of her naval warfare may perhaps be recalled.

These incidents, in which the skill and courage of the officers and men have been conspicuously exhibited, may appear to a casual observer as detached and only due to the enterprising spirit and the activity of the Italian Navy. They are, on the contrary, the links in a single chain, evidence of a well-planned naval policy, adapted to the special conditions of warfare in a narrow sea like the Adriatic, and to the comparatively few ships available for manifold tasks. As we have seen in a previous chapter, the gallant challenge of the Italian main fleet in the first months of the war was not accepted by the enemy, and some casualties ensued, as the sinking of the *Amalfi* and the *Garibaldi*, already mentioned. The experience was not

fruitless, and a new policy has been pursued since then, in the hope of inflicting the heaviest losses on the enemy with the least danger, while the largest ships anxiously wait for the coveted opportunity of fighting.

Fourteen times the well-defended Austrian harbours have been raided by the Italian torpedo-craft. A daring raid was that made by Italian destroyers upon Pola on November 2, 1916. This had been exceedingly well planned, with the double object of reconnoitring the harbour and torpedoing any enemy vessel within range. For their perilous task the three destroyers had been stripped of everything but the most essential equipment. They set out at night. As they approached the harbour, they found themselves surrounded on all sides by mine-fields. The chances of their safe return appeared to be small. Threading the dangerous waters, all three destroyers reached the entrance of the Fasana Channel. Here, as had been prearranged, two of the three remained behind, ready to take any offensive or defensive action that the circumstances might demand. The third, with Commander Goiran, having lowered the boom, ventured forward into the very heart of the hostile port, one of the strongest naval bases, it must be remembered, in existence. For two whole hours, with the utmost coolness and extraordinary seamanship and judgment, she patrolled and reconnoitred the various defences of the harbour. She then caught sight of a large vessel, at which she discharged two of her torpedoes—unfortunately without effect, since the vessel was netted, and the torpedoes were thus held up. The visitor being now discovered, the whole harbour became, of course, a mass of bristling defences. Amidst wheeling searchlights and under heavy fire, she was completely successful, however, in rejoining her companions, and all three, in spite of the fact that the enemy was now fully aware of their presence, succeeded in once more threading their way through the channels and mine-fields to sea.

Another illustration of skill and daring was exhibited on

December 9, 1917, when two small torpedo-boats succeeded in entering the port of Trieste, after having severed the big steel hawsers at its entrance, an operation which occupied more than two hours. Two torpedoes were fired at the largest ships then in the harbour; the *Wien* was sunk and the *Budapest* badly damaged, while the two assailants were able to escape and safely join their base. These two ships were more than twenty years old, but they had lately proved to be very useful to the enemy and troublesome to the Italians, shelling the extreme right wing of the army on the River Piave.

Perhaps one of the most daring exploits of the naval war was that reported by the Chief of the Naval Staff in Rome shortly after the daring attempts by Admiral Sir Roger Keyes to seal the Belgian ports of Ostend and Zeebrugge in the spring of 1918. "In the early hours of May 14, Lieutenant-Commander Mario Pellegrini, of Vignola (Modena), Torpedo-Gunner Antonio Milani, of Lodi, Leading Seaman Francesco Angelini, of Syracuse, and Leading Stoker Giuseppe Corraia, of Cagliari, with rare courage, praiseworthy individual self-sacrifice, and the greatest military and naval skill, eluded the active observation of the scouts and searchlights, and penetrated into the very strongly fortified military port of Pola. There they repeatedly fired torpedoes against a battleship at anchor. At dawn our seaplane squadrons, arriving in succession over Pola, found enemy chasing planes already up. Our pilots brought down two enemy machines, and forced another to land. All our machines returned safely to their bases."

Commander Pellegrini, as was beforehand arranged, sunk his own boat; he is now a prisoner, together with his gallant little crew. In order to appreciate the character of this and other exploits, it must be recalled that Pola is the principal base of the Austro-Hungarian Navy, which for nearly three years had been developed by every means. It lies at the head of a bay of the same name, and the harbour is almost



completely landlocked. Nature has done much to render Pola inaccessible, and the Austrians, by recourse to every means of defence, had endeavoured to protect it from such an incursion as had been successfully carried out. It is dominated by strong batteries, which rise up the surrounding hillsides in imposing sequence, and no measure in the way of mobile defence had been neglected to prevent Italian vessels approaching the men-of-war; mines, searchlights, destroyers, and submarines had been utilized to render access, as it was thought, impossible by enemy craft. Owing to the islands which rise in the outer harbour, navigation is at all times somewhat difficult when approaching the naval anchorage, but this Italian raid had to be carried out in the darkness of the early hours of the morning. The official message from Rome supported the conclusion that, while the Italian motor-boat was engaged in its work of destruction, an Italian squadron of seaplanes, arriving over the port in succession, attracted the attention of the enemy. In that event we have evidence of a very ingenious combination of naval and aerial forces. The official message from Rome gave colour to the belief that the battleship so vigorously attacked was sunk.

Meanwhile an active patrolling of the Adriatic continued to be carried on by light cruisers and smaller ships. A particularly illuminating incident, illustrating the just regard in which the Austrian torpedo craft hold their opponents, was that of May 3, 1918, near the River Po. No less than ten Austrian torpedo-boats were encountered by four Italian destroyers. The enemy declined action, in spite of the superiority, which seemed to promise every chance of success. They headed at once for their refuge of Pola, being hotly pursued by the small Italian squadron, which shelled them vigorously almost to the entrance of the harbour itself, when, some large Austrian cruisers appearing, they had to withdraw.

Yet another incident which should be mentioned was the

co-operation between Italian and British naval forces acting on the flank of the Italian Army during the great offensive of May, 1917, in the Southern Carso. Here, at daybreak on May 23, British monitors, with an escort of Italian destroyers and an accompanying force of Italian aeroplanes, bombarded, from the Gulf of Trieste, the rear of the Austrian lines, especially the aerodrome and shops and sheds near the village of Prosecco. Later they shelled and did great execution upon the railway near Nabresina on the way to Trieste, the defence works at Prosecco, and the railway-station of Opicina. Protected and escorted by Italian aircraft and the flotilla of destroyers before mentioned, the British monitors were also able to bombard the coastward slopes of the famous and bitterly contested position of Mount Hermada. These tactics were repeated in September, 1917.

On June 9, 1918, the untiring activity of the smaller ships was well rewarded off Premuda, one of the islands bordering the Dalmatian coast. Commander Rizzo, the officer who sank the *Wien* in the port of Trieste, was on patrol duty south of Lussin. He was already on his way back to the Italian coast, when in the misty dawn he sighted thick columns of smoke to the northward; thinking he had been discovered, and that destroyers had been despatched to chase him, he decided to prevent the attack and make the enemy pay as heavily as possible for the destruction of his own two small boats. He soon, however, perceived that the advancing forces consisted of two Dreadnoughts, escorted by ten destroyers, and that here was the chance of his life. Having ordered Sub-Lieutenant Aonzo, in charge of the other boat, to attack the second battleship, he succeeded in crossing the outer line of destroyers without, at first, being detected, and fired two torpedoes at a distance of about 200 yards, hitting his target amidships. He was discovered; a destroyer opened fire with tracer shells, but was too near to hit the small boat. Having avoided being rammed, and

being hotly pursued until the Austrian vessel was less than 100 yards distant, Commander Rizzo dropped a depth charge just ahead of the nearest destroyer, and saw her reel over and, badly damaged, abandon the chase. Meanwhile Sub-Lieutenant Aonzo had fired his two torpedoes, hitting with one the battleship allotted to him; he saw the first already sinking, and was able to overtake his superior officer on his way to their base, where they safely arrived in due time. The Austrians have acknowledged the loss of the *Szent Istvan*.

There were only four Dreadnoughts in the Austro-Hungarian Navy: the *Viribus Unitis*, giving the name to the class; the *Prinz Eugen*, the *Tegethoff*, and the *Szent Istvan*. Each of these vessels was designed to displace 20,000 tons, mounts twelve 12-inch guns, besides a dozen 5·9 quick-firers, has an armoured belt 11 inches thick, and can steam at 20½ knots. The group cost £10,000,000, the *Prinz Eugen* and *Szent Istvan* having been completed in 1915 and the other two in 1913.

It was rumoured that the ships left Pola, considering the harbour unsafe after the daring raid of Commander Pellegrini; others believe that they were on their way to shell a coast town in order to depress the spirit of the Italians on the eve of the Austrian offensive on the Piave. Be that as it may, the fact remains that one of the largest and modern Austrian battleships, in addition to the *Wien*, was sunk, and, at the worst, two more, together with the *Budapest*, may for a long time be considered as lost. One has only to look at the list of the Austrian men-of-war to justify the naval policy energetically pursued by the chiefs of the Italian Navy against the enemy.

The course of the naval war has not allowed the Navy of Italy any relaxation in those strictly defensive measures so imperatively imposed upon her by the extreme length and vulnerability of her coast-line. Supreme as she has made herself by her exertions in these narrow Adriatic waters, it

has not been possible wholly to eliminate the chances of swift raids from the opposite shores. As an example of what she has still to contend against, as well as a tribute to her vigilance, in that such incidents have been so comparatively rare, may be cited the elaborately planned, although happily frustrated, raid by the enemy of April 4, 1918, on the coast just north of Ancona.

The object of this raid, which had been long and carefully thought out by the Austrians, was not only to blow up the submarine flotilla at anchor in the harbour of Ancona and to destroy the Austrian torpedo-boat B 11, which had been captured by the Italians, but also, if possible, to seize and capture or destroy the naval motor-boat detachment in the port. Setting out from Pola at four in the afternoon, the party chosen for the enterprise, sixty in number, embarked upon the torpedo-boat 69, with a motor-launch in tow and a destroyer escort, and crossed the Adriatic at an average speed of about 20 knots. When some fifteen miles from the shore, the landing-party were embarked in the motor-launch, the most careful measures having been taken to muffle the sound of the engines. Soon after two in the morning they reached the shore, but found that, owing to some grave mistake in their calculations, they were nearly seventeen miles north of the town of Ancona. Amongst the qualifications of each man who had been chosen for this enterprise, a fluent knowledge of the Italian language had been insisted upon. The fact that they all spoke with a Venetian accent was undoubtedly not without its bearing upon the measure of success that they nearly attained. Armed with revolvers, knives, and bombs, and carrying between them nearly 60 pounds of dynamite, they marched boldly along the coast in military order. They were wearing uniforms that, owing to the darkness, might easily have been mistaken for those of Royal Italian Marines.

Just as it became light, the enemy visitors discovered a cottage in a lonely and isolated position, whose only

occupants were a woman, two small children, and a dog, and here they decided to remain concealed until evening. This they did, having meanwhile selected two of their company to go forward into Ancona, disguised as peasants. As a result of their report certain modifications of the original plan were apparently decided upon. Instead of blowing up the Mandracchio Sugar Factories, as had previously been arranged, they decided to concentrate their efforts upon the squadron of motor-boats, which they designed to capture, and in which they hoped to be able to make their escape from danger as speedily as possible.

Accordingly, at sunset they buried their dynamite in the garden of the cottage, and about midnight started towards Ancona itself. They succeeded in passing unchallenged into the town. One of them, however, escaped in the darkness down a side-road and gave the warning to some Italian Carabinieri, who immediately communicated with headquarters. The rest of the party, unconscious of this desertion, proceeded on their way, the officer in command telling the first sentry he encountered that he had orders to board the motor-squadron. Another stage of the perilous journey was thus accomplished. The next sentry who was met, however, had his suspicions roused and followed behind the party, until one of them, perceiving this, suddenly turned and struck him with a dagger, but too late to prevent the gallant man firing his rifle and thus giving the alarm. The alarm was raised and the Austrians surrendered *en masse*.

While this raid failed, in spite of the extreme care with which it had been planned in all its details, it indicates yet another difficulty with which the Italian naval administration had to contend—namely, the very favourable conditions under which the Austrian Secret Service has been able to operate on Italy's shores. With so many Austrians speaking fluent Italian, and with such pronounced differences between the accents with which Italian is spoken in the various provinces of Italy herself, the detection of such agents becomes natur-

ally difficult. Moreover, for many years the popular seaside resorts and bathing stations with which the Italian coast of the Adriatic is dotted have been crowded summer after summer with cosmopolitan visitors, by whom it was quite easy for a large amount of exact and valuable espionage to be carried out. The degrading influence, too, of Austrian rule upon the Italian people in the unredeemed maritime States was almost certain to have produced a certain number of bastard Italian-Austrians purchasable for such services.

Needless to say, however, Austria has not had matters all her own way in respect of the efficiency of her Intelligence Department, and with the vast bulk of the Irredentist populations on the other side of the Adriatic passionately in sympathy with their mother-country, and welcoming every opportunity to help her, much extremely valuable work has been performed by many daring and patriotic Italian agents. Chief among these mention must be made of the heroic Nazario Sauro, whose name already promises to go down in the annals of Italian history in the true linear succession to those of Mazzini, Garibaldi, and the great patriots of an earlier generation.

A native of Capodistria, in the Gulf of Trieste, he seems from his earliest days to have been imbued with an intense desire to dedicate himself to the high cause of reuniting Istria and Dalmatia with Italy. At the age of fifteen he was already beginning his long and perilous career as a seaman, and five years later, at the age of twenty, he had become a captain. Devoting himself, possibly with a view to future development, to the task of making himself as familiar as possible with the waters of the Adriatic, he soon became an authority second to none. He studied, in particular, the Gulf of Trieste, making himself acquainted with every shallow and creek and current of the islands of the Quarnero, and was soon as at home in any one of the eighty ports of Istra as in his own bed. Nazario Sauro speedily placed himself amongst the foremost of Adriatic navigators.

It is safe to say that there was not a channel or hiding-place between Grado and Cattaro which he had not visited and thoroughly reconnoitred. All this time, too, he was busily engaged in fanning the flame of patriotism amongst the unredeemed peoples of these coasts that he knew and loved so well. Nor, as his knowledge grew, and his appreciation of the extraordinary and strategical advantages of these coasts, that should have been rightly Italian, increased, did his ardour in the cause of making them so diminish. After the European War had broken out, and during those few months in which Italy was neutral, he worked indefatigably amongst his fellow-exiles in Capodistria, Trieste, Pola, Fiume, and other of these Irredentist ports.

Shortly before Italy declared war, he boldly contrived one night to nail up the Italian flag on the prominent flag-staff of the Galee Quay at Capodistria. On Italy declaring herself, he at once placed himself, with his unique knowledge, at the disposal of the Italian Navy, and between that date and the date of his capture by the Austrians he successfully carried out no less than sixty-two separate missions in all sorts of disguises, and always in the most imminent peril of his life. Another task to which he set himself, and in which he attained considerable success, was that of enabling large numbers of his fellow-countrymen, who had been unwillingly conscripted into the Austrian Army, to effect their escape to Italian soil. On many of these journeys he was accompanied by his little son Nino, barely fourteen years old, who, disguised as a cabin-boy, would carry, hidden in his garments, secret maps and documents and the necessary passports to secure the escape of Irredentist refugees.

But Nazario Sauro was caught at last. Leaving Venice for the last time on June 29, 1916, he was recognized by two enemy captains in the port of Pola. He was immediately arrested and accused. With such issues at stake and so many lives depending upon him, he deemed it his duty to

deny his identity. This afforded the Austrian Government a unique opportunity of demonstrating to the world the peculiar brutality of its penal methods. Perceiving that they would not succeed in breaking down Nazario Sauro's silence, the Austrian authorities sent for his mother, and every day for a whole week confronted her with her son, pressing her to declare his identity with such a pitiless and reiterated insistence that the physical and moral torture became at last too great for her, and she was at last forced to admit that he was indeed her son.

He was thereupon sentenced to be hanged, but, as might be expected, carried himself like a hero to the very end, though his brutal captors forced his mother to be the spectator of his death. His last act on the scaffold before he went to his death was to shout with all his power, "Death to Austria! Long live Italy!"

So died Nazario Sauro upon an Austrian gallows, in every circumstance of inhumanity, but expressing in his death more even than the courage of a wholly fearless and noble-minded patriot. For in his great sacrifice there breathed and became vocal—more fully, perhaps, than in that of almost any other Italian martyr—the spirit of that greater Italy still struggling in its chains for its final freedom from alien tyranny.

## CHAPTER IX

### THE PART OF THE MERCANTILE MARINE

AS in the case of Britain and France, so also in Italy, the part played in the war by the Mercantile Marine and its seamen has been one of splendid and consistent heroism. As in Great Britain, so in Italy, the Mercantile Marine has proved itself no whit inferior in all the great qualities of



seamanship to the high standard set by the respective fighting navies. To a great degree, indeed, the two have been so merged as to have ceased, as it were, to be mere partners, and to have become a homogeneous force.

In the work of mine-sweeping, submarine-chasing, and transport, it is upon the Mercantile Marine that the Italian Navy has almost wholly depended. In the perils to which it has been exposed by the everyday and humdrum but vital carrying of every sort of provision for the army and civilian population, the sublimest levels of self-sacrifice have been maintained by every unit of Italy's mercantile fleet. Nor must it be forgotten that in very many respects the difficulties of Italy's Mercantile Marine have been far greater than those of any other of her Allies. Young as a Power, her Mercantile Marine was young also, and comparatively weak. Important as its development was regarded, that of the navy had justifiably been deemed more urgent. Rapidly as it had been expanding, the war found Italy's Mercantile Marine handicapped. Even before the war, owing to the enormously increased demands of the country, the Italian Mercantile Marine was far from sufficient for the national needs. In 1913, for instance, Italy possessed only 45 tons of tonnage to every thousand inhabitants, as against the 48 tons of France, the 66 tons of Germany, and the 425 tons of Great Britain. The Italian Mercantile Marine was, indeed, scarcely sufficient for a quarter of the national traffic. Of the 22 million tons of goods transported every year to Italy, scarcely 6 million were carried in Italian ships. Further, more than half of these ships were already out of date. That Italian Mercantile Marine development was proceeding with large strides when the war opened is, of course, true. The output of the Italian yards in 1913 was 47,732 tons, whereas the average of the previous five years was only 23,500 tons. Considerable progress, moreover, was being made in the construction of marine engines, new developments in this respect having been

already initiated in the well-known yards of Ansaldo, Tosi, and Savoia. All this was, however, instantly arrested on the outbreak of war. Perhaps no branch of Italian industry has suffered more severely from its interference than the particularly vital one of mercantile shipbuilding.

Further, it must always be remembered, in this connection, that Italy has no coal of her own; and the world shortage of tonnage has during the last four years reduced the importation of this essential factor in Italian industry to less than half the amount consumed in normal years, at a time when the need for it was immeasurably increased. It is true that, stimulated by the emergency, every other source of possible substitutes has been industriously explored and tapped. Lignite, which is to be found sporadically in most parts of Italy, although of poor value, is now being used in many industries. Charcoal is also being employed even in blast furnaces. The turf bogs of Tuscany and the Ferrara district, the anthracite of Venetia, Sardinia, and the Western Alps, and the bituminous shale of Venetia, have all been pressed into the service. But the fact remains that for the great bulk of its supply of fuel Italy is still dependent upon its foreign imports, the result of all this effort having been to demonstrate that she can scarcely produce for herself more than one-tenth of her fuel requirements.

Again, as regards metal, Italy has always been dependent upon overseas sources for a very large proportion of her necessary raw material. Copper and tin she almost entirely lacks, and, while needing 25,000 tons a year of the former, she is only able herself to produce 2,000 tons. Of the essential alloys for the manufacture of chrome ore, nickel steel and tungsten steel, 20,000 tons were imported annually, and to this must be added an annual importation also of 50,000 tons of large steel castings.

Wholly apart, therefore, from its losses by enemy action, it will be readily seen that the problem of Italy's slender Mercantile Marine resources was an extremely acute one. At

once depleted on the outbreak of war by the necessary diversion to war purposes of many of its larger subsidized liners, and further diminished in carrying power by the conversion of cargo vessels into transports, the terrible inroads of submarine warfare, both limited and unlimited, became a matter of the utmost concern to the responsible Ministers and administrators. Steps, therefore, were taken to make the very best use of the available tonnage. A Commission of Control of Maritime Traffic was appointed early in 1917, and reported after three months that no less than three-quarters of all Italian cargo vessels were in the actual employment of various Government departments. The remaining 25 per cent., although still controlled by the Commission, were being allotted to the various munition factories taken over by the Government, or for the importation of essential goods. Passenger vessels, at reduced freights, had been requisitioned for the import of cereals and other vital food-supplies. Such sailing vessels as could reasonably be employed in this service were apportioned for the crying needs of the coal-supply, and to this end eighty-seven vessels, totalling 15,000 tons, had been set aside. Fortunately, the outbreak of war had found a considerable number of German ships in Italian ports, and it was not long before these were requisitioned by the Italian Government, between thirty and forty vessels thus becoming available.

Italy's efforts in safeguarding her Mercantile Marine against submarine attacks were ably handled. The various protective agencies were soon unified and placed under one control. A new department was set up to co-ordinate these various agencies, by which it was hoped effectually to check, if not master, the submarine menace. The arming of merchant ships, the equipment and deployment of swift motor-chasers, the provision of coastal fortifications, and the use, where possible, of nets and protective mine-fields, thus came under the direction of one head. Admiral Corsi, the Minister of Marine, was able to announce in March, 1917,

that more than 1,000 guns had already been supplied to the Italian Mercantile Marine, of which no less than 60 per cent. was already sufficiently armed, most of the vessels hitherto lacking the newer means of communication having further been supplied with Marconi installations. Nevertheless, the submarine campaign succeeded at first in creating a great deal of havoc amongst Italian vessels. Stunned as she had been, in common with the rest of humanity, by the sinking of the *Lusitania*, it was not, perhaps, until the torpedoing of the *Ancona* that the full length to which Teuton ferocity was prepared to go was brought home to Italy. There were certain respects in which the destruction of the *Ancona*—which may justly be called, perhaps, Italy's *Lusitania*—was even more savage than that of the ill-fated Cunarder.

It was on November 7, 1915, that the *Ancona*, a large passenger vessel belonging to the Italian Mercantile Marine, was sunk. Outward bound from Naples to New York, she was carrying, at the time, over 500 passengers and crew, the large majority of the former being poor emigrants, including in their number many women and children. The submarine which sank the *Ancona*, although flying the Austrian flag, was believed on good evidence to have been manned, at any rate in part, by German officers and men. Without the least warning, the submarine, while still at a considerable distance, brought a powerful gun to bear on the unfortunate liner, killing and injuring many innocent persons before actually torpedoing the vessel. While the ship was still sinking this bombardment was continued, amid the natural and unavoidable panic of wounded and dying men, women, and children. Though the captain and officers, under these unparalleled circumstances, did their utmost to maintain order, the greatest confusion was inevitable and many lives were lost. Not only upon the ship itself, but upon the actual lifeboats, was this murderous fire continued.

No better description, perhaps, of this dreadful scene can be given than in the remarkable narrative of one of the third-

class survivors of the unhappy vessel. "Exactly at one o'clock," he said, "on Monday afternoon we sighted a submarine at a great distance. She came up to the surface and made full speed in our direction, firing, as she did so, a shot which went wide across our bows. We took this to be a warning to stop. The women screamed piteously, and the frightened children clung desperately to their mothers. Meantime the submarine continued to shell us, while gaining rapidly upon us. After the fifth shot, the chart-house was partly carried away, and another shot completely destroyed it. The engines then ceased going, and the *Ancona* was at a standstill. The submarine, which we could now see dimly, was Austrian. She came alongside, and then we heard the commander talking to the captain of the *Ancona* in a somewhat curt manner. We were told that the Austrian commander had given a few minutes' time for the passengers and crew to abandon the ship. Then the submarine withdrew to a little distance.

"No time was lost in making the necessary arrangements, but soon there ensued a regular pandemonium. All the passengers, women and men, big and little, appeared to have completely lost their heads. The submarine continued to fire around the vessel. There was a rush for the boats which were being lowered. The passengers got into the boats, but in the confusion many of them were not altogether free from the davits and were overthrown by their heavy load, the occupants being thrown into the water.

"Many struggled before our eyes until they were drowned. The shrieks of the women and children rent the air, but no help, it appeared, could be given. During this indescribable and heartrending scene the submarine continued to discharge shot after shot. Such ruthless conduct was all the more incomprehensible, as not one shot was directed at the ship itself, the assailants firing all round the vessel, as if to create as much terror as possible."

From this account it may reasonably be stated, perhaps,

that as regarded the sheer barbarity of its submarine assailant the sinking of the *Ancona* was perhaps the bloodiest of any similar crime hitherto perpetrated by the Central Powers at sea, the only excuse offered by the Austrian Government being that the *Ancona* tried to escape. To this charge the Italian Government replied as follows :

"The Austrian communiqué is false in its fundamental facts. All the survivors of the *Ancona* testify that the submarine made no signal whatsoever to bring the ship to a stop, nor did it even fire a blank warning shot. This armed aggression took place without any preliminary warning.

"The *Ancona* was bound for New York, and could not have been carrying such passengers or cargo as could justify capture, and therefore she had no reason for attempting to avoid examination. Moreover, it is a false and malicious assertion to state that the loss of so many human lives was due to the conduct of the crew. On the contrary, the bombardment by the submarine continued after the *Ancona* had stopped, and was also directed against the boats filled with people, thereby causing numerous victims."

Nor was Italy alone in protesting against the horror of this atrocity. On December 6, Mr. Lansing, the American Secretary of State, used the following words in a note from the United States Government to Vienna upon the same occasion: "The Government of the United States considers that the commander of the submarine violated the principles of International Law and humanity." And the note went on to demand not only the official disavowal by Austria of the incident, but the condign punishment of the offending officer. Needless to say, in its reply to this the Austrian Government evaded the plain issues, only half-heartedly admitting the responsibility after Mr. Lansing, in a second note, had sternly repeated the demands of the first.

Such was the history of the *Ancona*, and it was only too typical of many such incidents that were to follow in its wake. In proportion to its size, Italy's Mercantile Marine

has suffered no less severely than that of its Allies. During the early months of the unrestricted submarine warfare, which was declared by the German Government in February, 1917, some half-dozen Italian steamers were sunk weekly. Though it would not be desirable to give exact figures, and while it must not be forgotten that, to a certain extent, Italian shipyards have been able to make good some of their losses, it may be said that Italy has lost at least one-third of her total pre-war Mercantile Marine.

It is gratifying, on the other hand, to realize that in some measure her allies, and especially Great Britain, in spite of her own difficulties, have been able to help her in this particular emergency. An agreement was made with Italy by Great Britain in January, 1916, by which the British Government placed at Italy's disposal no fewer than 150 steamers for purposes of coal importation and as carriers of cereals and other essential foodstuffs.

## CHAPTER X

### ITALY'S FUTURE IN THE MEDITERRANEAN.

#### I

JUST as between 1815 and 1870 the racial impulses that could not be withstood, despite every measure of armed coercion, brought the Italian States together into national unity, so during the present war this same movement has extended towards its full and final fruition.

Throughout Europe, indeed, a like process has been revealed to the world in unmistakable terms. The whole might of Germany, though it could occupy and ravage all but the tiniest fragment of Belgian territory, could not eliminate—served only to exalt, indeed—that national spirit

which was the real Belgium—a thing not of territory, but of the soul, that no armed legions could destroy. Similarly, in Poland, harassed and oppressed as no other land, perhaps, in the world's history, that same impulse, indefinable but indestructible, of the racial desire for self-development has only become tenfold more insistent.

In Austria itself, that ramshackle Empire, compounded of so many unwilling and ethnically incompatible elements, the same movement has already grown to undeniable proportions. Blood has called to blood, rallying and revivifying ground-down and half-obliterated nationalities, until the right of self-government of separate peoples, apart from their mere size and the weight of their armament, has become not merely a pious academic ideal, but a world-wide process in actual fulfilment.

Serbia, Montenegro, Roumania, Syria, Armenia, and Greece, each of these has become, not less, but more vocal and individual, despite all the vicissitudes that they have undergone. Government of their peoples by their peoples for their peoples, in Abraham Lincoln's immortal phrase, is already in birth—in the act of such a parturition as no number of alien bayonets will ever be able to stem. And the demand of extradition from a foreign yoke of the Irredentist Italians in the Tyrol, in Istria, and in Dalmatia is not less insistent. Upon its larger aspects, in that respect, this is not the place, perhaps, fully to dwell, but in considering the future of the Mediterranean it will be seen that upon the final adjustment of these particular claims, more than upon any other single factor, the satisfactory solution of the problem may be said to depend.

Small as it is, in comparison with the world's oceans, this inland lake—for the Mediterranean Sea is scarcely more than this—possesses, and will probably always possess, both historically and strategically, a significance far out of proportion to its mere extent. Not only the cradle of civilization and the birthplace of sea-power; not merely



the focus from which the arts of Greece and the laws of Rome have spread and left their impression on every civilized country; not merely the centre of the first overseas commerce, the home of the earliest navies and mercantile marines; not merely the first inspiration of those theological systems that have permeated the whole thought of the Western world; not merely the source of myths of unparalleled beauty, the progenitor of Venus and Neptune; not merely the scenic background of the Homeric epics and the missionary journeys of St. Paul—the Mediterranean remains, and will probably for many centuries remain, the great connecting-channel between West and East, and the chief highway of the multiple contributions of each to the knowledge, prosperity, and progress of the other.

It is only a truism, therefore, to assert that a waterway so essentially international, so peculiarly destined by its situation to be the servant of all mankind, should, as far as human foresight can secure, be freed from the danger of sectional jealousy and the continual threat of some reactionary, anti-humane, and world-grasping Power. And it is further clear that during the present war a very great stride has already been taken towards this desirable end.

For many years before, indeed, owing, in the first place, to the mastery and liberal traditions of the British Navy, and in the second to the *Entente*, whereby the same traditions were made secure by the co-operation of the French Navy in these historic waters, the freedom of the seas, as far as the Mediterranean has been concerned, had been an accomplished and undisputed fact. And the fleets that dominated it have been the instruments of democratic and liberty-loving nations, constitutionally governed. Nor since 1914, though that mastery has been challenged, has it ever been in serious danger of being overthrown; and the declaration of Italy and the addition of yet a third powerful navy pledged to freedom has made the position even more secure.

From the point of view of the future, too, a brief survey of the Mediterranean seaboard, as they are at present governed, while it still presents possible sources of danger, is on the whole reassuring. With Britain represented at its western entrance, and on friendly terms with Spain; with its eastern entrance, in the Suez Canal, also under British protection, practically the whole of its southern African boundaries are now being administered by democratic Powers. Turning to the northern coast, we have the westernmost segment in the hands of Spain, a Latin kingdom. Abutting upon this is the coast of France—a Republic always foremost in the development of the progressive ideals of representative government.

Compared with Spain and France, however, Italy has been allotted by Nature an overwhelming proportion of the Northern Mediterranean frontier. She possesses a Mediterranean seaboard, as we have already stated, twelve times as extensive as that of France, and, including Sicily, almost double that of France and Spain combined. It is a satisfying assurance for the future that so great and strategically dominating a proportion of the Mediterranean coast should also be under the administration of a constitutional Power that has already given innumerable hostages to the cause of world freedom.

Following the coast eastward, we find the great and irregular projection of the Balkan Peninsula, with its many outlying islands. The southern and most considerable portion of this—namely, that bordering on the Ionian Sea to the west and the *Ægean* Sea to the south and east—is in the hands of a Power that, during the present war, has, after much travail, made a great stride towards democratic ideals under the wise guidance of that far-seeing statesman, M. Venizelos. The far eastern border, too, represented by the Syrian and Palestine coasts, has now largely passed out of the hands of the oppressive Ottoman Government, as we may hope, for ever. While the future

of the Dardanelles and that segment of the Mediterranean littoral occupied by Asia Minor still remains obscure and a potentially dangerous area, to the student of Mediterranean strategy in the present phase of evolution the key of the future peace—the vitally necessary security—of the Mediterranean lies more than anywhere else in the just solution of the government of the Adriatic.

With the Adriatic at rest, held by its true nationals, according to those principles of liberty and self-government for which the greater part of the world is now in arms, the storm-centre of the Mediterranean would be eliminated. It would be scarcely overstating the position to assert that the solution of the Adriatic is the solution of the whole problem of the Mediterranean.

## II

From the point of view of Italy, it is certainly obvious that a satisfactory settlement of the Adriatic position is imperatively necessary. Held, as the northern and eastern shores are, by her own expatriated nationals, the present distribution of power in the Upper Adriatic, at any rate, is both geographically and ethnically offensive. It is the pistol-point held at the heart, not only of Mediterranean, but of European peace. As we have seen from the course of the present war, it has only been possible by an enormous development of her naval strength, by its unceasing vigilance and readiness to sustain sacrifices, and by a consequent disproportionate absorption of its total offensive power, that Italy's Navy has been able to overcome the almost intolerable handicap that the present distribution of Adriatic territory has entailed upon her.

The whole of her past history has, indeed, shown the paramount importance to her of the administration of the Istrian and Dalmatian seaboard. It was from Istria that the lumber was drawn to build the fleets of Venetia; and a

large proportion of its crews and navigators, to say nothing of five of its rulers, hailed from the same district. The importance of this area of coast-line, with its dominating headlands, its protective islands, and magnificent harbours, both potentially and in actual existence, has been recognized by all the great empires abutting on the Eastern Mediterranean. To secure the Adriatic Rome founded colonies at Aquileia, Tergeste, Pola, Zara, and Salona. The Byzantine Empire, to guarantee the same essential balance of Adriatic power, took measures to create formidable defences on the Istrian and Dalmatian shores. At a later day the various enemies of Venetia, realizing the same strategic importance of these Eastern Adriatic seaboard, almost invariably based their attacks, when possible, from the same commanding region. It was always from here that the fleets of the Turks, Saracens, Hungarians, Normans, Genoa, and Pisa, sought to overthrow the supremacy of Venice.

Nor was its profound significance lost upon the military genius of the great Napoleon. To confine the sphere of the Hapsburgs to Austria rather than to Germany—to secure that Germany remained behind the Rhine—Napoleon sold Venetia, Istria, and Dalmatia to Austria, under the Treaty of Campoformio. And later, realizing the danger, from the maritime standpoint, of conferring so advantageous a position upon Austria, he removed it again from the sphere of the Hapsburgs at the Peace of Presburg following his victory at Austerlitz. Ten years later, however, upon the defeat of Napoleon, Austria succeeded, at the Congress of Vienna, in again obtaining these same territories, upon which it was clearly seen that the mastery of the Adriatic depended. Venetia, as we have shown, was once more reabsorbed into Italy after the incredible efforts of the Italian patriots, but as the present war has demonstrated, it was largely Venetia in chains and with an Austrian sentry at her door.

How clearly that has been demonstrated, indeed, is sufficiently evidenced in the fact that to-day the whole of Italy is Irredentist. Every officer of the *Entente* navies who has operated in the Adriatic is a witness to the enormous strategical advantage possessed by Austria in this Italianate coast-line. To Pola and Cattaro there is no possible counterpoise other than an overwhelming supremacy at sea, and a corresponding absorption of offensive power and liberty of movement in the mere sentry work that these impregnable bases impose. Fortunately, the Italian Navy has been adequate and the Austrian fleet at every point outnumbered and outmanœuvred. But before proceeding to consider a future in which such conditions might very possibly not be reproduced—a future with Istria and Dalmatia still held by a reactionary Government and with a vastly developed fleet as its instrument—let us reflect for a moment upon how easily even the present position might have proved wellnigh fatal for the Allied cause.

### III

In the stunning succession of events such as we have been living amidst for the last four years, the splendid and dramatic occurrence of last week has often become the almost forgotten commonplace of to-day. With battle succeeding battle upon such a scale as the world has never before witnessed; with the minor action, equivalent to the Marathon or Waterloo of bygone years, dismissed in a line of a communiqué; with the disappearance of a dynasty or the occupation of a country the subject of an evening's gossip and scarcely remembered the next morning, the salient incidents of the war's history are only too apt to be overwhelmed in its comparative irrelevancies.

Only in years to come, when the turmoil has subsided, will the great rock-incidents emerge and be seen at last in their true proportions and epoch-making significance.

And amongst these there can be little doubt that the entrance of Italy into the *Entente* will prove not the least impressive. Even had Italy remained neutral, a moment's reflection, in view of what we now know as to the war's developments, will prove how profoundly the whole course, not only of British operations in the Near East, would have been affected, but how, much farther afield, and especially in Asia and Egypt, the consciousness of her attitude might have spread.

With Italy neutral and the defence of the Adriatic in the hands of Britain and France alone, it is almost inevitable that we should have witnessed such an extension of submarine successes in the Mediterranean as would alternatively have crippled or very seriously modified the Allied naval activities elsewhere, or made the maintenance of communications with Egypt and Salonica, and through the Suez Canal with India and the Orient, very hazardous. With Italy neutral, the tragedies of Serbia and Montenegro would have found a consummation almost unthinkable, and have struck such a blow to the prestige of the Allies in the Near East as it might well have staggered under for generations. With Italy neutral, the strain upon the Allies' naval resources might well have been such as to have given the German U-boat policy the satisfaction of accomplishing the task that it had set out so boastfully to achieve. For the same reason, with Italy neutral even the intervention of America might scarcely have become effective for so many months longer that it might well have come too late to liquidate the losses already sustained by the *Entente* Powers.

Such considerations, are, of course, obvious, and other disastrous possibilities might be conjured up, upon many of which it would be unwise, as it is now, happily, unnecessary, to enlarge. But if such would have been the position in the event of Italy's neutrality, what would it have been in the event of her hostility—if, instead of denying the

gospel of the Triple Alliance as interpreted by the Ministers of Prussianism, she had accepted the alluring bribes which she could have commanded by proclaiming it? A glance at the Mediterranean will suffice to show. For with Italy's Navy against the Allies; with the Gulf of Lyons and the Western Mediterranean threatened by such bases as Genoa, Spezia, and Naples; with Sardinia and Sicily upon the sea routes; with the Adriatic no longer bottled-up, but such an arsenal and nest of submarine and destroyer activity as no measures, perhaps, at the disposal of the Allies could have overcome; with the long coast-line of Tripoli and Cyrenaica hostile from end to end, isolating Egypt and the Suez Canal on shore as they would also almost wholly have been at sea; with Greece at the mercy of such overwhelming enemy forces that no other than a pro-Teuton policy could have had a moment's life there; and with Serbia and Montenegro exposed to invasion on their one remaining flank through Albania—the vision is surely sufficiently explicit for the least thoughtful person to return in mind to May 23, 1915, and confess that it was certainly one of the dates which the whole of the civilized humanity will always have reason to bless.

Between France and Italy, although, as we have seen, they have had their differences in the past, largely as the result of the machinations of Prussian diplomacy, there has always been an underlying sentiment of friendship. Both Latin, both cherishing in the deepest fibres of their nature a love of liberty, of "live and let live," and an undying hatred of tyranny and intolerance, they were destined by nature to be friends; and that friendship has now been sealed a thousand times over by the blood of heroes. Between Great Britain and Italy, less akin by race, but as closely knitted by common ideals, there has never been anything but the warmest of regard, now deepened and multiplied a hundredfold. It is pleasing to realize that in the future security and development of the Mediterranean

and its surrounding territories these three great maritime Powers have common interests.

Writing in 1909, the great British naval constructor, the late Sir W. H. White, concluded an admirable and enthusiastic appreciation of the Italian Navy, written for the *Spectator*, in the following terms :

“The traditional friendship between Italy and Great Britain, and the important influence which the existence of a powerful Italian fleet must exercise upon the maintenance of our position in the Mediterranean, make it a matter of the highest importance that Italy should not decline from her position relatively to other Mediterranean Powers, or lose the place that has been so hardly and honourably earned amongst the war-fleets of the world.”

Those are words that every Englishman will endorse after the ordeal that she has so loyally and gallantly shared with France and Great Britain.

While in the foregoing chapters we have laid stress chiefly upon Italy's work in the Adriatic, whereby she relieved to so notable an extent the work of the British and French navies, this by no means exhausts the long record of her help. By her entrance into the war new and swifter routes to the Near and Far East became available, and the great and convenient resources of Taranto and Brindisi were put at British disposal with unstinted generosity ; while of the splendid work of her hospital ships at Gallipoli no Briton can be forgetful. What was true in 1909, therefore, is doubly true to-day, now that British and Italian seamen have died together in the common cause. It is impossible to believe that, with such sacred pledges between them, the future can hold anything but a further knitting of the bonds of friendship. In the prosperity of Italy, in the preservation and sound development of her overseas colonies, and in the consequently necessary expansion and perfection of her Navy and Mercantile Marine, the British people have every interest.



With Eritrea, Italian Somaliland, and Tripolitania still in their infancy, it is as vital to Italy that the Mediterranean should be secure from the threatened dominion of a world-devouring autocracy as for the British Empire, with overseas territories dependent upon the same conditions. For Italy, as for the British people, the Suez Canal is one of the essential arteries of civilization. It is the direct route to Eritrea and Italian Somaliland, no less than to British East Africa and India. Just as Italy's position demands, and will naturally continue to demand, an efficient and powerful Navy, so also, with British world-wide interests wholly dependent for prosperity upon the freedom of the seas, the British people can entertain nothing but kindly sentiments towards the extension of Italy's sea-power in so dominating a position upon the Mediterranean.

High as Italy's traditions at sea have always been, they have never stood higher than at this moment, and in the words of Nazario Sauro, so full of prophetic faith, as he met his death on the Austrian gallows, the British people, like the French and American peoples, from our hearts, in this dark hour of the world's history, can look in friendship towards the future and say, "*Viva l'Italia!*"

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## ITALY'S PART

In an address on the occasion of a lunch, given by the Lord Mayor of London on May 22, 1918, to commemorate the third anniversary of Italy's declaration of war, Lord Robert Cecil, Assistant Secretary of Foreign Affairs, declared:

"On an occasion of this kind my mind goes back not only for three years, but beyond that time to the beginning of the war. It is a long time ago now; but we must still recollect the terrific impressions which were upon all of us

when we entered upon this great struggle; and I do not think there was any more encouraging event than the fact that Italy showed by her conduct then that she would not have part or lot in the aggressive designs of the Central Empires. Then, after due reflection, the Italian Government decided to throw in their lot with their present Allies. Three years ago it was not a very encouraging situation. Our armies were still in the making; the struggle was still very intense, and those who joined us then must have joined us because they were convinced of the righteousness of our cause, and not because they were fighting to gather in the fruits of a facile victory. It was gratifying to us for many reasons, and not least because it reminded us of the traditional friendship between the two countries. We recalled the warmth of our sympathy at the time when the modern kingdom of Italy was in the making, and we were rejoiced that that fact had not been altogether forgotten among our Italian friends. But though friendship and gratitude may have played their part, I venture to think that the compelling force was the recognition by Italy that our cause was her cause, and that she could not afford to stand aside in a struggle between democracy and tyranny, between vassalage and freedom, between justice and oppression."







